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THE REVELATION OF DEITY

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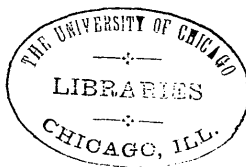
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PREFACE

ALTHOUGH, as its title indicates, the present volume deals with fresh aspects of the same main subject as two of its predecessors, it is independent of these, and can be read therefore with only incidental reference to them. At the same time, this has entailed some degree of repetition which will, I trust, be tolerated by readers already familiar with my general standpoint.

As regards this standpoint itself, it has (in my own opinion) found ample confirmation in many important respects since my earlier volumes were published,¹ while on the other hand practically no facts have emerged that tend to disprove it. In particular, I should like to refer to the lucid discussion of the technicalities of the problem of Personality in Dr. William Brown's *Mind and Personality*. I believe that his conclusions are in the main in complete agreement with my own, with the exception, however, of his somewhat negative attitude as expressed on p. 307 of his work.

The two terms "Universe" and "Reality" present obvious difficulties arising from their highly diverse meanings in current speculation. I have endeavoured to minimize these difficulties by using (1) "Universe" and "Reality" when referring to the whole of Being or of Existence, and (2) "universe" and "reality" when their meaning is restricted to the more limited spheres of Existence, as e.g. to the material world or physical universe as distinguished from the mental or the spiritual.² If this is borne in mind I believe that the context, in each case, will make my meaning clear.

I should like to express my sincere thanks to the many

¹ Cf. especially Sir James Jeans' *The Universe Around Us*, and *The Mysterious Universe*.

² Cf. pp. 55, 149 below. In my quotations, however, I have adhered to the usage of the original text.

reviewers who have favoured my previous books with their kind approbation, together with much valuable criticism which has all had careful consideration, as in some instances the following pages will show. But I believe that I am justified in protesting against my basal principles being regarded as nothing more than mere assumptions and presuppositions. That "the Universe is an ordered Whole" and "is self-determining", and that "mind is fundamentally different from matter", are contentions having behind them the entire force of Hegel's philosophy, combined with that of many post-Hegelian thinkers of the first rank, and gaining an ever increasing prominence in current research of which Professor Whitehead's *Process and Reality* provides ample evidence. Of course this in itself does not establish the indubitable validity of the general standpoint. Nevertheless the vital distinction between conclusions of this order, advanced as the final outcome of systematic argument, on the one hand, and mere presuppositions and assumptions as such on the other, is patent to every student of elementary logic;¹ while these philosophers, still further, have plainly declared that initial assumptions have no rightful place within their own constructions.

The substance of Chapter III has appeared in *The Personalist*, vol. xii.

The Dedication speaks for itself; and I should like to express my indebtedness to the Right Rev. Charles Gore, D.D., for his weighty endorsement of my own principal argument in his recent Gifford Lectures, *The Philosophy of the Good Life*, as well as in other important respects; also to my wife, for her valuable assistance in dealing with the proofs and Index; and finally, as always, to the Publishers for their unflinching competence and consideration.

¹ Cf. "L.S.S." in *Mind*, vol. xxxvi, p. III.

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TO

PROFESSOR J. H. MUIRHEAD, M.A., LL.D.

AS A QUITE INADEQUATE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
OF LONG-STANDING INDEBTEDNESS

THE REVELATION OF DEITY

I

SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. THE consideration of the Revelation of Deity is best begun from the results that have, in my own opinion, already been established.¹ For these in themselves go far towards determining the main lines of the present enquiry. Deity has been regarded as a supremely real Being possessing personal attributes of the highest conceivable order, although this, of course, does not necessarily exclude other attributes which the human mind cannot comprehend, and which may be described as "numinous". Perfect knowledge and perfect power therefore, as inseparably one with perfect holiness and perfect love expressed in a creative purpose that is similarly perfect, of themselves constitute the eternal manifestation of Deity. Accepting this general position then as our present basis for further enquiry, a few sources of possible misunderstanding must first be guarded against before seeking more positive conclusions; and with regard (in the first place) to the word "perfect", this will be used as the proper meaning of the ambiguous term "infinite", which will therefore be employed as an alternative of "perfect". In this there is of course nothing novel; but if it should be regarded as somewhat unusual, this is merely the result of the confusion which unfortunately attends "infinite" itself; and in equating it to "perfect" I am only following the

¹ Cf. my previous volumes: *Personality and Reality* and *The Nature of Deity* (Allen and Unwin).

excellent example of Hegel and his successors. To pursue this point further here would be merely to repeat my earlier discussion;¹ but when we find that even the modern mathematician, who is generally regarded as the most matter-of-fact and least mystical of thinkers, describes "the aggregate of all real numbers" as "perfect",² we may safely feel justified in employing the term to mean absolute completeness or infinity.

Nor does the familiar argument that perfection must always remain only an abstract and formal idea, quite devoid of any concrete significance, present serious difficulty. For when it is urged that everything we actually experience is to some degree imperfect, two replies must be made. In the first place, the very fact that "imperfect" is a negative (or logically privative) term—that (in other words) it literally means "not perfect"—shows that it really implies and rests upon some notion of perfection. To take a much simpler instance, it is plainly impossible to describe an object as "not square" or "not round" unless we already know, more or less definitely, what squareness and roundness actually are. This is obviously true of all such negative terms in general; and this means that they all necessarily imply their positive correlatives. The word "imperfect" then is only one instance of this universal principle;³ and if it is further objected that the ordinary intellect can never attain any precise idea even of squareness, which in itself is an abstract mathematical concept, again the answer is that to the mathematician himself his notions of square-

¹ Cf. *The Nature of Deity*, chap. ii.

² Borel, *Space and Time*, p. 212; cf. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 7; "two ideals, coherence and logical perfection".

³ "Logic itself, in recognizing the imperfection of the correspondence notion, implies the grasp of the perfect notion" (Joachim, *The Nature of Truth*, p. 121),

ness and its allied qualities are quite clear. Every one of his definitions, in fact, is an expression of their character which is so precise and final that "mathematical exactitude" has become proverbial; and this gives us the clue to the truth of all such conditions as these. For it plainly shows that any obscurity and vagueness in our conceptions are almost universally the result of nothing but ignorance—ignorance, moreover, which can readily be overcome by the proper means, difficult though these often are. And although ignorance and error must always attend human experience, it is nevertheless a fatal mistake to lay our entire emphasis (as is so often done) on this fact alone, and thus to forget that the native tendency of the healthy mind is to rid itself of these defects exactly as the healthy body frees itself from disease. In the end, therefore, the mind discovers some method of dispelling the dense intellectual mists that enshroud it just as the modern inventor has succeeded in penetrating atmospheric fogs.

In general terms, then, the idea of perfection is obtained progressively by discovering the various defects which characterize any given object or situation. If these defects were removed, we often say, then the object would be perfect—sculpture or building, profile or sonnet as the case may be. In simpler instances, again, we use "complete" instead of perfect; so that whenever a proof or task, a geometrical figure or mechanical contrivance, is completed it thereby attains a perfection which is, however, of a relatively low grade. It is only when the final products become much more intricate, and when at the same time they make a profound aesthetic impression, that perfection appears in its real guise. But this itself is obviously a far higher level of completeness, since it must plainly incorporate a greater number of more diverse

elements; and under these conditions any incompleteness detracts fatally from perfection. Such ideal standards of perfection are however not only possible but are often actually realized, as in the familiar instances just referred to; and the only qualification of these great achievements lies in the additional fact that perfection of this supreme type can never be absolutely exhausted. Further triumphs of the same kind or of a yet higher order may always be attained; but this in no way contradicts our general principle; on the contrary it plainly expands and enriches the perfection that already exists. In both directions therefore—that is not only in idea nor in imagination but also in actuality—the appeal to the category of perfection is quite legitimate.

2. At the same time I have already admitted that from its very nature perfection must be inexhaustible; and this fact is often made the ground of a further serious misrepresentation of our present problem. For it is maintained that since perfection can never be realized in its full range and completeness, it must therefore remain always beyond the capacity of human understanding. As was supposed to be the case with the Ideas of Plato, so true perfection is frequently regarded as subsisting in some inaccessible realm of its own. Thus it becomes undeniably absolute, but in the same breath incomprehensible; so that no matter how sublime the creations of genius may be, it is (the argument continues) only by an utterly false convention that they can be called "perfect", since human experience is infected throughout its whole extent by the fatal virus of relativity and debarred therefore from all consciousness of perfection; even the abstract concepts of the perfect are at bottom illusory, and the term itself a deceptive misnomer.

The bearing of this general standpoint on the divine

nature is familiar. Repeatedly it has been maintained that although we can be certain of the *existence* of Deity, still his *attributes* can never be directly apprehended. Isis remains eternally veiled; only to an unknown God can worship be offered; and man is condemned to dwell in the dark vale of appearances while the sunlit heights of Reality are inaccessible. Alike in religion and in philosophy this position has been adopted; and such partial agnosticism is but little removed from the more positive type which insists on our irremediable ignorance as to even the existence of Deity, and (similarly) from the atheistic denial of that existence.

But in all these instances alike what we really find is only the gross perversion of a sound principle. In the first place, it is altogether wrong to suppose that the scientific Theory of Relativity completely excludes the idea of the Absolute. On the contrary, this theory declares that absolute entities unquestionably exist, firmly but deeply rooted in the very structure of the world; so that it is precisely the Absolute that enables us "to understand the relative appearances and see the world in a truer perspective".¹ Further, no one would dream of arguing that because I can never possess the total wealth of the world I am therefore penniless, nor even that I can never accurately ascertain the value of my property, limited though this must always be. On the contrary, the wealth of a multi-millionaire must be estimated in exactly the same terms as my own, although the valuable objects which it procures can never be obtained by myself; and this remains true no matter how rich he may become. I can still somehow represent to myself, however inadequately, his rare editions and great masters; and the general position is exactly the same with reference to

¹ Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*, pp. 122, 35.

man's consciousness of the attributes of Deity. This can be most easily seen, perhaps, in the case of knowledge. For while it is obvious that no finite mind can ever be omniscient, it is none the less quite possible, if not indeed even necessary, to form the idea of an experience which is completely free from ignorance, error and illusion. In the first place, we know quite definitely what the general nature of each of these is; and we know (still further) that the actual development of every mind consists in the gradual reduction of these defects. Nothing whatever therefore, except obsession by a pernicious obscurantist tradition, prevents our conceiving a mind from which they are totally absent, whose knowledge is for that reason infinite, perfect or absolute. Logically this concept is quite valid; and the allied concepts of infinite power, infinite love and (finally) infinite holiness, are equally valid. Professor Boodin, however, appears to find it a difficulty that "infinite perfectibility is an eighteenth-century dogma".¹ This seems to imply the facile but futile argument that the truth of a principle depends on the century to which it chances to belong; while every student of philosophy knows that the principle of perfection is so fundamental to Hegelianism that it has become the basis of the superficial criticism advanced by William James and others. Thus Bradley asserts that the "highest type we can imagine is the man who aims at ideal perfection; the moral end is qualitative perfection; I take the ideal as *perfect*, and demanding perfection on my side".² But we may easily go further than this. For we must now realize that as experience progressively attains its higher levels its constitution becomes more and more definite, and never more indefinite as is usually

¹ *The Personalist*, vol. x, p. 139.

² *Ethical Studies*, pp. 228, 246 *sqq.*, 321 note; (second ed.).

believed. Such a radically mistaken attitude is only the natural outcome of the severe limitations of our ordinary experience, since in practice anything that is markedly definite must almost universally be either simple, or rigid, or both combined. Every building, every machine and every argument are patent instances of this general rule; so that as soon as we attempt to construct something that is at the same moment both plastic and complex, no matter what this may be, the immediate result is a serious loss of definiteness—a certain degree of vagueness and confusion. Hence we unthinkingly conclude that the essential nature of such extremely intricate realities as Life and Mind, Art and Spirit, must be likewise quite obscure and indefinite. This attitude finds frequent expression in much facile poetry, popular philosophy and cheap mysticism which, since they make scarcely any demands on our powers of understanding, always enjoy a deplorable vogue. But it is an impression that is completely disproved alike by the principles of aesthetics and by every discovery of recent science. The highest art, in the first place, always demands the highest possible precision alike in its content and in its form, as is quite obvious to the sensitive mind in every fine poem or statue or picture. Symmetry, proportion, balance, rhythm—each alike consists in the most exact relations between the most delicate of innumerable factors. It is only genius that can surmount the baffling difficulties of such tasks; and when we reflectively contemplate the final superb creation we find that it always possesses an extremely definite detailed structure—so definite, in fact, that it may be called “rigid” in the sense that it is unalterable except at the risk of serious damage. All this becomes clear in even such a simple aesthetic affair as good dancing, with its necessarily precise neuro-muscular coordination

and consequent difficulty of accomplishment; and this common aptitude also exhibits the second essential characteristic which is too rarely associated with artistic definiteness—that is the remarkable freedom of movement or “plasticity” which gives every expert dancer her gracefulness. No further argument therefore should be required to show that the same plasticity—the same absence of *narrow* rigidity—is still more essential to all great poetry and music, and this despite the extreme rigour of their technical structure. A very simple test is quite sufficient to prove all these important points. Let the reader try to write out, entirely from memory and without any error, a fine poem which has not yet become perfectly familiar; or better still, copy (again from memory) the score of a great symphony with absolute accuracy, and he will quickly become convinced of the intense difficulty of all such tasks. How much greater therefore must be the difficulty of their original composition before this assumes its final incomparable form. The popular impression that these products of genius are spontaneously dashed off in effortless fits of what is supposed to be “inspiration” is almost too ridiculous to mention.

Turning now from art to science, we find exactly the same precision of delicate structure, inseparably combined however with an extreme plasticity of function, present alike in all physical objects and in all organisms—in atoms and molecules, in the constituents of living cells and in the tissues which these compose.¹ It is, of course, the grossest of errors to regard any of these as being formless or indefinite. This belief arises only from the

¹ This has been further confirmed by recent research into electronic structure. Proteids similarly possess a unique combination of physical stability with chemical flexibility which is indispensable to all living processes.

intense difficulty of discovering their infinitesimal elements; and the truth is the direct contrary. For in spite of their minuteness, the most exact mathematical and chemical formulæ are necessary in order to describe adequately their diverse activities and to express their governing laws; while the wide range of the resultant reactions, as in vitamins and the ductless glands, has become a matter of common knowledge. But these phenomena are all due, at bottom, to that universal combination of extreme definiteness with high plasticity now under consideration. As Professor H. E. Armstrong has recently pointed out with reference to Carbon, "no other element has the same plasticity nor the same trustworthy steadiness; no other element can give rise to so infinite a series of permutations and combinations"; and Carbon, therefore, is "the foundation stone of life".¹ Such extraordinary sensitiveness is, however, by no means confined to vital processes; the delicate responsiveness of Selenium, which has become so important in connection with all forms of wireless transmission, is but one instance out of many that occur below the level of life. But for the innumerable details of these phenomena I must refer to the recent excellent textbooks on atomic structure, reproduction and heredity.²

So much then for the realms of matter and of life; and from the very nature of the case it is much more difficult to show that the same conclusions hold equally true with regard to mind, whose invisible and transient elements can never be perceived nor weighed. It should be plain however that the plasticity of organic functions is im-

¹ In *Isaac Newton*, p. 6. Cf. Dr. Crew's reference to "the precision and the wonder of the mechanisms concerned" in the phenomena of sex. *Nature*, vol. 120, p. 254.

² Cf. "The Transition from Live to Dead" (Boycott), *ib.* vol. 123, p. 91.

measurably exceeded by the plasticity of the highest forms of mind—by the supple grasp of a Newton's intellect or of the genius of Shakespeare and Beethoven. This itself is sufficiently familiar; but once again the formidable difficulties attending the detailed analysis of even the average mind—of isolating its factors from each other and of observing their modes of cooperation—inevitably create the impression that mind is actually structureless—a belief often expressed in the old principle of the "simplicity" of the self or soul. This however is another superficial popular superstition which must be abandoned. Only the most primitive types of consciousness, such as are associated with rudimentary nervous systems like those of the jellyfish, can properly be described as devoid of structure, and even these only when compared with the more developed forms. For even at this primary level there exist markedly definite modes of reaction which rapidly evolve into the complex instincts of mammals and birds. Thus the constitution of the animal's mind is (to say the least) as intricate as is that of its body; and this is still truer of the intelligence and emotions, the art, morals and religion of man. The details of this subject, however, form the commonplace of current psychology; and the essential point which must here be emphasized is that the continuous evolution of mind always results in a still further gain, first in the complexity, but secondly also in the definiteness, of its structure or constitution. These inherent characteristics attain their fullest possible culmination therefore in a perfect or infinite mind; so that once again we find that it is possible to obtain a concept of the general character of some aspects, at least, of the divine nature which is at once concrete and logically valid.

3. These considerations obviously have a close bearing

on the vexed problems of transcendence and "transformation"; and in view of recent discussion, I shall endeavour to make my own position in these respects somewhat clearer. The opinion is still widely adhered to that divine transcendence implies incomprehensibility *essentially and primarily*, so that, as Otto, Barth and others have insisted, it is in this direction that the fundamental nature of Deity must be ultimately sought and expressed, while on the other hand any attributes that fall within the range of human comprehension are at best only secondary. Now I have myself repeatedly insisted that the divine nature is inexhaustible; this indeed is one meaning of the terms "perfect", "absolute" and "infinite" alike. But to take this principle to mean that it is the inconceivable aspects of Deity that are *essentially* and *exclusively* divine is to disregard the conclusions advanced in the preceding sections, and therefore to deprive the only terms that we can possibly employ of all concrete and valuable significance. Deity thus becomes synonymous with sheer mystery, with the unknowable and "numinous", from which every recognizable feature has been systematically erased; and quite apart from the purely theoretical aspects of the problem, it is surely obvious that so far as its practical issues are concerned, any such standpoint completely destroys the foundation of all the highest forms of religion, and thereby reduces them to the level of irrational savagery. For while a "numinous" Deity thus envisaged must arouse terror or (at the utmost) awe, there can arise no possible basis for deliberate response and conscious communion. Every attribute without exception that man can attach to Deity is condemned in advance as inadequate or even illusory. Revelation therefore, which must always and essentially be a matter of responsive comprehension, becomes im-

possible from the outset; whereupon religion must degenerate into vain formality and morals into arbitrary convention devoid of all absoluteness. The final result of any such attitude, in short, is the direct converse of the worship of Nature. For just as Nature is so far below the human level that no properly reciprocal communion is possible, exactly the same practical result attends this absolute elevation of "numinous" Deity above that level.¹ But as soon as we recognize that the mind of Plato or Shakespeare was far more stable and self-consistent, or (in negative terms) less uncoordinated, than the average mind, so we may perceive that the divine nature must possess perfect stability and—in that sense—perfect definiteness of structure.² It is true that even these analogies are incalculably too feeble, so that to adhere to them too closely would be misleading. Nevertheless they are the best we can ever obtain; and with all their defects they yield the most reliable clue to the direction in which we must seek to apprehend the divine nature. This implies, still further, that even those attributes which to ourselves are incomprehensible must be similarly definite in their own way; while it also remains possible, as Professor Mackenzie has suggested, that what falls beyond the range of human reason may still be understood by minds of a higher order than our own.³ To deny this—to maintain that Deity is "numinous" to *all* finite minds without exception—is obviously to regard Him as completely severed from the apprehension of all His creatures—surely the most extreme type of Deism conceivable.

¹ Cf. below, pp. 72, 183.

² On "stability" cf. MacCurdy: "Intelligence demands (that) a stable consciousness must be present; (in) the feeble-minded (this) is episodic and fleeting" (*Common Principles in Psychology and Physiology*, pp. 75, 76).

³ *Mind*, vol. xxxvi, p. 53.

If any such view has been adopted in the supposed interests of religion, it may further be argued that what I have previously called transcendence *in* human attributes, as contrasted with transcendence *of* these,¹ is amply sufficient to inspire the highest types of emotional and moral responsiveness, rather than that fearful awe which is the utmost that can be aroused by the numinous purely in itself. For it must be realized that our appeal is here made to the finest elements in human experience as immeasurably intensified;—to the perfect power and knowledge which sustain the marvellous physical universe, to perfect purpose and perfect love, and to that perfect holiness which will ultimately destroy all evil. A religious consciousness which cannot subsist on these sanctions and motives surely deserves to perish.

The essential point here therefore, which is however at the same moment the essential difficulty, is to unite in firm combination the transcendence of the divine attributes with both their comprehensibility and their definiteness. Against this contention it is usual to appeal to Bradley, but at the same time to select always only the more sceptical aspect of his general position, as though this were his final deliverance on the subject. This one-sided emphasis is however both unfair to Bradley himself and unfortunate in its bearing on the present problem. Before expounding my own views further therefore, I must once again insist upon those *positive* features of Bradley's philosophy which far outweigh his better known negative standpoint.² In this connection it is quite suffi-

¹ Cf. *Personality and Reality*, p. 116.

² This positive aspect is (in my opinion) quite unmistakable throughout his *Ethical Studies*, particularly as regards the treatment of the Self; cf. p. 291 (second ed.), "the self feels itself to be one and a whole"; it should therefore supplement the more critical analysis of Selfhood in *Appearance and Reality*; cf. p. 35 below.

cient to refer to that passage, already quoted in *Personality and Reality*, in which this thinker has emphasized the *persistence*, and not the eventual disappearance, of those factors in experience which we ourselves regard as most valuable.¹ It is exceedingly difficult to understand why these quite plain and simple statements continue to be completely ignored, unless it is because they *are* plain and simple rather than abstract and recondite. But it will, I suppose, always remain hard to eradicate the popular impression that philosophy, to be of any value, must show itself first of all to be sceptical, and secondly must express its supposed scepticism as artificially as possible. Unfortunately the average mind, even when it reaches a high average, seems to regard intellectual negativism combined with technical abstractness with an innate respect which is suspiciously akin to that of the old peasantry for parson and squire.

It needs little acquaintance with the great historic philosophic systems, however, to realise that these are all fundamentally positive and assertive rather than finally sceptical, although at the same time a judicious scepticism has always characterized their initial handling of life's problems. But such preliminary criticism has never been more than a sauce which heightens the flavour of the repast; and to identify it, as is too often done, with agnosticism and cynicism is as foolish as to consume only the pepper and salt at a fine banquet. It should be superfluous to add that this holds true of the great school to

¹ *Loc. cit.*, p. 72: "thought would be present . . ."; cf. the footnotes here and also p. 107. It may be added that the same general principle of "preservation" is equally fundamental in Hegel's philosophy; the widespread impression to the contrary is radically mistaken; cf. e.g. *Science of Logic*, vol. ii, pp. 482, 483, and Bosanquet, *Value and Destiny*, p. 130, on "the conservation of value in the absolute".

which Bradley himself belonged, and which maintained the classic positiveness of the Platonic tradition even while it directed its corrosive analysis against the shallow pseudo-positives too readily accepted by modern thought. Certainly my own opinion, for whatever it may be worth, is that the leading principles of this system are all much more positive than has hitherto been realized. But quite apart from this minor consideration, it is to be hoped that the invaluable constructive side of the thought of Bradley and his allies will receive fuller recognition and appreciation in the future.

4. I shall now endeavour to present this positive standpoint in my own way; and the conclusion of the quotation just referred to will enable me to connect my position with Bradley's. For he has compared those elements of human experience which "would still burn in the Absolute unquenched and unabridged" to "a note absorbed in the harmony of its higher bliss". Now if we begin by employing this illustration in its literal musical sense, we shall find that the patent result is capable of universal application. When a single note, then, is incorporated within some chord or melody, it neither disappears nor changes its intrinsic character, but still remains precisely the same note as at first. Under such conditions sometimes even an ordinary person can detect it, as *e.g.* in the case of the brass or wood instruments in a large orchestra; while the trained ear can make still finer distinctions than this and plainly discern faint overtones to which others are deaf. In both instances alike, then, we have absorption within some larger whole, undeniably combined with an unchanged individual persistence; while as soon as this persistence ceases the final result is so profoundly altered that absorption itself ceases also. The composer is in fact entirely dependent on this persistence of each of the

separate notes for the production of his finest effects; and this principle holds true of every artist without exception. Each minute patch of colour in a great picture, each delicate curve of a statue or building, each balanced phrase of a poem, no matter how commonplace in itself it may be, must retain its original character if the artist is successfully to weave or "absorb" it into his completed work.¹ It is equally true, of course, that as this slowly develops, each isolated part takes on wholly new aspects, so that in the end it seems to have become quite unrecognizable; and in this feature we find the explanation of the widespread erroneous belief that its absorption consists, in some wholly mysterious way, in the partial or complete disappearance of its original identity. But such disappearance is obviously both unnecessary and impossible; all that occurs is a reorientation of our attention in such a way that instead of its being focussed upon each separate factor in turn, it becomes concentrated on the total content to the comparative exclusion of its elemental parts. Every expert observer however, simply because his trained faculties have acquired a highly increased delicacy, remains critically aware of both the whole *and* its distinct parts; the simplest instances (again) being the detection of the overtones of a single note or chord, or of the flavours of wine or tea by *connoisseurs* and blenders.

To put the main issue somewhat more crudely then, a stone does not cease to be a stone by being built into a great cathedral; and precisely the same is true, though naturally with far deeper significance, of selfhood and the attributes of selfhood. If it is further argued that the stone

¹ I have elsewhere cited Christina Rossetti's use of "Too Late" in this connection; cf. also Wordsworth's "We are Seven", and much of the bald narrative of "The Ring and the Book".

assumes new relations which "transform" or "transmute" it, it may be replied that the stone is *intended* to enter into such new relations and would, in one sense, not be a stone at all unless it did so. This means that not even the stone has ever existed in complete isolation, but has always fulfilled some function, no matter how apparently trivial, in the long history of the earth and solar system; and this is equally true, in the end, of everything. It is (in other words) an essential part of the intrinsic nature of everything that it is inherently capable of entering into some more inclusive combination within which it finds its home, as it were, in order to fill its natural *rôle* in the entire scheme of things.¹ In so doing, and in fact only in so doing, can it properly express and more fully develop its own nature. Even material or static or dead objects, like stones and metals, must do all this; while to describe them as static or dead means that they continue (as I have already insisted) to retain their original characters. When we turn, on the other hand, to living and conscious beings this seems to be no longer true, so that once again "transformation" or "transmutation" appears at first sight to destroy their primary nature. But this impression is completely mistaken, and is simply due to our failing to comprehend what the true nature of living, and still more of conscious, beings really is. For we unthinkingly regard them in the same light as dead and unchanging objects, thus ignoring the truth that the very nature of life and consciousness demands incessant change or—still more truly—incessant development. While therefore "transmutation" does undeniably occur, this must not be interpreted as any actual loss of identity but rather as the ever fuller manifestation of the real nature

¹ Cf. again Professor Armstrong's description of the combinations of the atom of Carbon, *ante* p. 17.

of the plant or animal or—above all—of personality. In each of these cases alike it should be plain that the more fully it develops the more it becomes its true self—the further it is “transformed” the more does it assume its proper identity. The gradual rise of a citizen like Napoleon, Cromwell or Lincoln, from his original obscurity to supreme power is perhaps the clearest example of this principle, since it is in his highest status that his character finds its completest expression; but it is exactly paralleled by the advance from the ovum to the adult organism, or from the barbaric tribe to the world-wide empire.

5. The instances of great men such as those just referred to, however, enable us to see that in personality the basal principle with which we are here concerned becomes most fully exemplified; and the reason for this, in general terms, lies in the fact that (so far as our present knowledge carries us) personality constitutes the highest level attainable by the evolutionary advance of Reality.¹ This is true even if we consider only average individuals; still more true therefore if we take genius into account, as of course we must; since to exclude genius as exceptional or abnormal is plainly equivalent to excluding the anthropoid apes from the lower animal kingdom. But selfhood, at every one of its stages alike, is extremely significant in still another important respect, since its principal factors enjoy an inherent capacity for further expansion which is unique, being present in no lower types of organization whatever, whether mental, vital or physical. For the

¹ “Personality is the key to the universe; it is our highest interpretative concept.” Dr. F. R. Tennant, *Philosophical Theology*, vol. i, p. 127; cf. further 154 below. Again contrary to the prevailing impression, Hegel attached the highest value to the concept of Personality. “The highest and acutest point is simple personality”; *Science of Logic*, vol. ii, p. 483; cf. further *Logic* (Wallace), pp. 270, 271, 274, 293.

bodies of both plants and animals, and similarly the animal mind, all reach a stage beyond which no marked advance can ever be made, and which is therefore final. But from the very nature of its constitution, selfhood is exempt from this fatal limitation. There is, in principle, no conceivable boundary to the expansion of knowledge as such; and this implies (still further) that a similar inexhaustible potentiality characterizes the emotions and the will, although it is here impossible to outline the psychological details of the situation. "This power of continued growth", observes Professor Julian Huxley, "is one of the highest attributes of personality. There is no theoretical obstacle to be seen at present to an increase of human powers in range of comprehension, intensity of feeling, or brilliance of intuition."¹ To this we need add only that while knowledge, will and emotion are equally capable of this unlimited expansion, each nevertheless continues to remain knowledge *etc.*; in other words, it becomes itself ever more fully, in such a way that while it is certainly "transformed" it is never transformed into something else. But it must also be remembered that to separate either of these psychic attributes from its allies is to destroy it. The logician must of course isolate knowledge for the purposes of his own investigation, just as the psychologist must isolate volition or affection; but in no actual experience can knowledge possibly exist purely by itself. Not only does it incessantly fluctuate with the delicate variations of will and emotion, but its very existence necessarily demands both their existence and their parallel development; just as they, in their turn, reciprocally demand an ever growing knowledge. Each faculty can exist and expand therefore only in the most intimate connection with its allies; and it is most unfor-

¹ In *The Mind*, p. 39; *Essays of a Biologist*, p. 55.

fortunate that the necessities of research and analysis too often lead us to forget this fundamental truth. For this blinds us to the all-important fact that it is precisely the reciprocal and inescapable combination of knowledge with will and emotion (together of course with many other factors of subordinate importance and value) that constitutes the "self" or conscious individual; and to regard this combination as only a kind of mosaic, which certainly holds together but which might just as well be taken to pieces, involves a radically inadequate conception of selfhood. The psychical fusion of knowing, feeling and willing is a fusion in which the very existence of each attribute depends on the existence of the others, while at the same time their mutual dependence does not impair, but on the contrary incessantly heightens, the inherent contrasts between their profoundly diverse natures. For this reason their intimate combination forms a thoroughgoing unity comparable to that of man and woman in marriage, or of many citizens in a single corporation or nationality; while the value and efficiency of all these are plainly increased by the growing diversity of their members, provided always that this can remain properly coordinated.

The word "unity", however, brings its own disadvantages and dangers. For it usually denotes singleness, and this in the mathematical sense of numerical oneness and solitariness. It is very difficult, that is to say, to realize that although a combination of this kind may be extremely complex, it must nevertheless act always as a single unit. Perhaps a great nation, unanimously responding to some overwhelming impulse or crisis, is the clearest instance of what actually occurs frequently, and indeed normally, in the real world. For in every living cell, every organism and to some degree every species, Nature achieves this marvellous feat of binding

highly diverse elements into functional units; so that evolution may be regarded as the progressive re-combination of these units into systems of a higher order which become ever more diverse internally, yet at the same time more inseparably coordinated.

But as I have just observed, it is only when personality is attained that these unified systems become capable of an *unlimited* development. The unity of selfhood therefore means the very reverse of bare simplicity and exclusiveness, and consists on the contrary in a wide comprehensiveness and diversity. Each self is constituted by the firm union of its principal elements, which differ in detail, of course, in each particular instance. Unfortunately the inadequate mathematical meaning of "unity" unconsciously leads us to regard the self as being some mystic entity which is never thus identical with its main constituents, but is in some incomprehensible way essentially distinct from these, although it incessantly controls their activities as if they were its puppets. Thus the soul which Descartes located in the pineal gland, and the noumenal *ego* of Kant, are familiar philosophic expressions of this attitude which are on all fours with the crude popular belief in ghost-like disembodied spirits. Along such lines as these, however, man's age-long search for his own essential being is foredoomed to failure and to the bitter scepticism which repeated disappointment inevitably breeds; for here, as always, "hope deferred maketh the heart sick".

All these considerations plainly have the closest bearing on our concept of Deity. For erroneous ideas about the nature of our own personality must naturally reflect themselves in equally erroneous ideas of God. Impressed by the triviality and transience of even the highest human attributes, and forgetting that they are inherently

capable of an illimitable expansion, we naturally refuse to attribute them to the Divine nature. Pursuing that will-of-the-wisp, the noumenal *ego*, across the boundless bog of speculation, we inevitably seek at the same moment an impossible transcendent Deity—transcendent, that is, in the sense of an impersonal or super-personal Being whose absolutely impenetrable mystery exerts the irresistible fascination of the unknown; while just as the *ego* is supposed to be independent of all its experiences, so this transcendent *Deus* becomes isolated and remote from man's known universe.

But provided that these antiquated concepts are rejected, we must lay due emphasis on the *singleness* of the self as being a further essential aspect of its unity. We have just seen that the self resembles a nation in its high complexity. But just as nationality also implies independence, so personality possesses an inherent and ever increasing independence. For its knowledge, its emotion and above all its will incessantly mark it off and distinguish it from everything else; and just as a nation sinks in the scale if its independence is impaired, and is politically destroyed when this disappears, so selfhood likewise rises and falls concordantly with its own independence. This is clearly the case, in both these instances alike, whenever the independent status already enjoyed has to be asserted or defended against opposition. But it remains equally true even when cooperation occurs, although here the absence of rivalry and the consequent merging of interests tend to conceal the actual state of affairs. But neither a really great nation nor a great man sacrifices freedom by a voluntary alliance with others; on the contrary, this may easily become the best means of increasing the original freedom and initiative. And this again holds true, in principle, without

any final limitations ever arising, as is most easily seen in the long history of great countries; the brevity of human life, on the other hand, appears fatal to this suggestion. But if the self is immortal, this difficulty vanishes, and it plainly becomes possible for personality, in endlessly increasing its knowledge and its allied attributes, at the same time inevitably to increase its native independence, no matter to what degree it may unite its own efforts with those of other finite beings, or even of Deity.

This means, in other words, that freedom is an inherent attribute of all personality, whether finite or infinite. It can differ only in its degree of development, while at the same time its finite degrees may expand illimitably. It is then only from this standpoint that Bradley's principle of "absorption" can be properly interpreted; so that (to recall his own illustration) when the "notes" are finite selves, these persist *as selves* even in the "harmony" of the Absolute experience, instead of completely losing their identity like raindrops in the ocean; or, stating this in terms of my own theistic position, even throughout their eternal relation with Deity, provided always that this relation is one of voluntary—which again means free—cooperation and not a sullenly rebellious servitude.¹

So much then for "absorption"; and I feel convinced that the further widening of modern knowledge will yield a more accurate understanding of man's nature, together with a deeper insight into its connection with the constitution of the Universe, thus enabling us to realize that Divine transcendence, without in the slightest measure belying its claim to that title, is a transcendence *in* human attributes and not, in any absolutely exclusive

¹ On this point *cf.* my fuller treatment of Freedom in *Personality and Reality*, pp. 109, 183.

sense, a transcendence *of* these. It is transcendence in their range and elevation, not necessarily transcendence of any essential characteristics. But with this issue I have already dealt more fully in my earlier volumes; and from this standpoint I shall proceed to discuss the conditions governing the revelation of Deity.

II

THE REVELATION OF CREATIVE WILL

I. IN the succeeding chapters I shall frequently make use of arguments resting upon analogy. We must briefly consider, therefore, the familiar objection that in the present connection all analogies remain inadequate or even misleading, since we can never find perfect analogy between the divine attributes and any finite attributes whatsoever. This difficulty is of course undeniable, since perfect analogy would amount to identity. But it does not therefore follow that analogy is altogether valueless and incapable of throwing any light at all upon our problems. The proper discussion of this subject belongs, however, to Logic, and involves some degree of technicality. Avoiding this as far as is possible, it may briefly be explained that in spite of all its limitations, analogy forms one of the most powerful weapons in the mind's intellectual armoury; but like every other weapon, its effectiveness depends on the way in which it is used. Whenever our lack of positive knowledge debars us from attaining complete proof or absolute demonstration, analogy becomes one of the most fruitful methods of reasoning that we can employ. But this method, like every other, is governed throughout by its own severe rules and conditions; and since it is here impossible to outline these in their full detail it must suffice to point out that if analogy in itself is altogether excluded, then we are almost entirely prevented from carrying our enquiries any further and must remain for the time being in our previous ignorance; while so far as the alternative devices of experiment and observation are concerned, it is analogy that often points the way to their most profit-

able application. What must be avoided therefore is not analogy in itself, but loose and misleading analogy; and equally in law and in science, except indeed on those comparatively rare occasions when the latter succeeds in assuming mathematical form, analogies that are properly pursued and logically developed frequently yield conclusions of high value. Hitherto my arguments have been largely analogical. But as they have, in my own opinion, enabled us to establish the real existence of personal Deity and also to ascertain (on purely philosophic grounds) His principal attributes, I believe we may safely adhere to this method whenever a better one proves to be unavailable.¹

It is clear then, to begin with, that the revelation of Deity, as personal, must be the revelation of a self. Our best course therefore is to enquire in what manner the highest type of human selfhood must manifest itself—to outline the necessary conditions of its most effective modes of expression and action. For it should now be superfluous to observe that selfhood, as such, is essentially active and dynamic; so that although certain types of passivity are frequently requisite, these are never more than resting stages in its long history, comparable to the familiar dormant periods of many living organisms like hibernating animals and seeds. In principle and as an ideal (still further) these inherent activities of the self always tend in one definite direction—that is always towards acquiring the most effective methods which will

¹ With regard to the purely technical aspects of Analogy, cf. Bosanquet, *Logic*, vol. II, chap. iii. "Analogy is essentially an argument about the significance of a type (p. 87); Analogy rests on the *importance* or significance of attributes (p. 99); in the formation of hypothetical judgments we *sacrifice reality* for the sake of necessity, and lose an element which was present in Analogy" (p. 107); (my italics).

enable it to dominate its environment.¹ It is unfortunately true that in pursuing this end average personalities adopt means that are often very ineffective; and this inevitably creates the widespread impression that all selfhood as such is fundamentally defective—a point of view that has been enshrined in Bradley's well-known philosophical analysis of the self in *Appearance and Reality*. On this important issue, however, I believe that Bradley has adopted a radically mistaken method of argument, so that despite the undeniable effectiveness of his criticism the real crux of the matter has after all escaped him.² For it is of course obvious (as he insisted) that all human beings exhibit self-contradiction, and this to a serious and sometimes indeed a fatal degree. But the essential point is that all this is due, not to their being selves, but on the contrary to their *not* being selves in the real sense of this term—it is, in other words, due to their being merely extremely low types of selves; or as Professor H. N. Russell has recently expressed this fact, "we are spiritual Protozoa—low in organization . . . a lot of us appear to be not merely Protozoa, but pathogenic".³ In this respect Bradley's entire attitude is plainly identical with that of a zoologist who insists that mammals lack high organization simply because Amœbæ have neither skeleton nor brain—a standpoint clearly illogical in two important respects; first because he confines his consideration to the simplest forms of animal life alone, and secondly because he ignores the inherent tendency of life, when regarded as this should be in its entirety, to assume ever higher and stabler modes of organization. In my own opinion, this universal progressive vital tendency becomes much

¹ For a fuller discussion of this principle cf. *Personality and Reality*, chap. v.

² Cf. note p. 21 *ante*.

³ *Fate and Freedom*, pp. 76, 77.

more obvious in the sphere of mind, particularly at its latest stages, than it is anywhere in the sphere of bodily organization. For the development of what we may describe as the civilized mind, both as racial and still more noticeably as individual, always proceeds much more rapidly, and at the same time more widely and more definitely, than does the evolution of the body, which seems indeed almost to have reached its culmination.¹ If we consider *e.g.* the literally enormous range traversed in the scanty years between the birth and the flowering of a genius like Mozart or Keats, this simple but pregnant fact becomes patent; although it does not mean that the body itself has no significance in this respect. In approaching our present problem, therefore, it is quite legitimate to emphasize, as Bradley has most effectively done, all the grave defects of finite personality. But at the same time it is far more necessary to insist on the fundamental truth that the real essence of life, and above all of selfhood, is not to retain but to *remove* their initial weakness and limitations. The outstanding characteristic of all life as such, equally as physical and as psychical, is that it always tends not only to maintain itself at any given stage but also to advance to ever higher levels; and it may be not merely metaphorical to say that the invertebrate seeks to acquire a skeleton, the reptile to gain wings and fly, the dumb animal to discard the bonds of instinct so as to think and speak. However it may have come about, we know that all these changes have in fact occurred; and again it is unnecessary to appeal to any mystic and incomprehensible causes. The ultimate reason for the advance, as all research increasingly shows, lies in the intricate constitution of Nature itself and of the Universe. It is only in the light of this continuous evolution there-

¹ Cf. *ante*, pp. 15 *sqq.*

fore that the actual nature alike of life and consciousness, but especially of personality, can be properly understood; while to ignore or minimize these obvious aspects of the situation must ultimately lead to serious illogicality, as I venture to believe it has done in Bradley's case.

2. The true estimate of selfhood, then, enables us to see that its real essence must be found in the incessant effort to remove those defects which handicap it at any given moment. Generally this struggle proceeds quite unconsciously, in response to some vaguely felt lack or desire; frequently however, as in the case of every ambitious individual, it becomes fully deliberate and systematic; and although the underlying motives are then too often of a low order, still we need only consider a supremely able general or statesman to realize that it is, in the end, this *deliberate* striving that marks all the higher forms of personality; while it is in this way, we must further observe, that the self becomes gradually but steadily and radically transformed. Thus the tyro becomes an expert, the student a genius, the backwoods lawyer a president and the little corporal an emperor; while it may be added, incidentally, that in undergoing this far-reaching change the individual always becomes more and more "self-conscious" in the literal psychological meaning of this term, and not at all in its usual sense of embarrassment. He thus becomes, that is to say, ever surer of himself and of his own position, more and more able to control his temperament and direct his peculiar abilities towards the desired end, which again, in its turn, becomes more and more definitely visualized; but all this is simply a somewhat technical restatement of the truth that he has now become a "self" in the fuller significance of this term, just as, *e.g.*, an oak is more of a plant than is a moss.

But while these conclusions are of vital importance for

any true interpretation of the real nature of personality, they still remain inadequate in this respect because they concern only the *subjective* aspects of the situation. But all these inner changes of the evolving self must inevitably manifest themselves objectively also, since the connection between its internal activities and its external actions is never merely accidental. On the contrary, the character of the former determines that of the latter; so that as personality slowly attains its higher levels, or (in other words) increasingly assumes its own proper form, the individual's abilities and deeds all become systematically directed more and more in the single general direction of a completer mastery of its world, either political or artistic or intellectual as the case may be. In the last of these instances indeed, and so far as pure knowledge is concerned, the dominance enjoyed by personality has already attained a marvellous range, soon however to be immeasurably eclipsed; for "with the aid of the prism", observes Professor Armstrong, "the chemist has captured the world and is as certain of the external composition of the individual members of the stellar universe as he is of that of the insignificant unit in its vast system upon which he lives".¹ This extensive and profound knowledge, again, is plainly neither merely abstract nor confined to a small section of society; on the contrary everyone who uses a wireless set is, though at secondhand, utilizing such highly technical theory for his own practical purposes.

In pursuing our analysis further therefore, we must confine our attention neither to personality as subjective alone nor to its objective environment alone, but must always unite both within one inclusive scheme. This combination, unfortunately, is far too seldom effected; for the unique characteristics of mind—the deep-seated differ-

¹ In *Isaac Newton*, p. 5.

ences between itself and its entire social, vital and material environment—naturally tempt the psychologist to isolate mental processes of all kinds so that they can be investigated purely in themselves; and although this method is indispensable for research, still it can never be philosophically adequate nor final. Now so far as the individual himself is concerned, this greater predominance over his world for which he is always seeking is a matter of will. It makes no difference in this respect whether his aims are high or low, subconscious or fully deliberate, efficiently pursued or tactlessly lost; whether he wants only a house in a better neighbourhood or, like Alexander, new realms to conquer. In every instance alike he must use or exert his will; and his success, in the end, depends on the stage of development which this has attained. To state the matter in this way, however, is apt to confirm the popular view that the will is a separate faculty or power which can readily be dissociated from the person himself, just as ordinary instruments or tools are temporarily employed and then dispensed with. But every such impression is fundamentally mistaken. For the will can never be too closely identified with the self; and thus it is, in reality, one of the principal ways whereby personality expresses itself—one of its main modes of self-manifestation. In a certain highly important sense therefore, the will literally *is* the self; it is the self, that is to say, not as intellectually contemplative nor again as aesthetically affected, but rather as focussing all its diverse powers and attributes upon some more or less definite course of action. In its psychological aspects, indeed, the subject is too technical and complex to be given any adequate elucidation here, so that it must be sufficient to emphasize the crucial principle of the *identity* between the will and the self. The development of the one, therefore, is at the same moment

the development of the other, so that the nature of any given personality can, to a marked extent, be ascertained from the observation of his will.¹

3. In the present enquiry, however, our interest lies in the first place in the progressive stages which the will gradually attains during the long and—in principle—interminable evolution of selfhood; and since (once again) this question involves both the subjective and the objective aspects of the situation simultaneously, we must also consider those radical changes in the methods of *external* expression which this evolution necessarily involves. We are here concerned, in short, with the manner in which the self more and more effectively impresses its dominance upon its environment; and it is obvious that so far as human personality is involved, this environment is to a very large extent, if not in fact predominantly, a physical or material environment. The term “physical”, still further, must here be expanded to include even vital processes so far, at least, as these occur in organic matter; for as we have already seen, one “foundation stone of life” is to be found in the chemical element Carbon.² This general principle is plainly true, then, as regards human personality; but it may also hold, though in widely different ways and degrees, of *all* personality no matter how exalted this may be—a question, of course, which must await further consideration.³

Now when we proceed to state this relation between personality and its environment in more definite terms than the foregoing general outline, we are brought into contact with all those problems of Mechanism with which I have already dealt in *Personality and Reality*; and to

¹ Stout's definition may be helpful: “Volition is a desire qualified and defined by the judgment that, so far as in us lies, we shall bring about the desired end because we desire it.”

² *Ante*, p. 17.

³ Cf. pp. 67, 68 below,

avoid needless repetition it will be sufficient to summarize my position very briefly here. But before going further, I may take this opportunity of dealing with Dr. F. R. Tennant's serious criticism of my general standpoint recently advanced in *The Journal of Theological Studies*,¹ where he suggests that my entire argument for the real existence of Deity is vitiated because it forms a *petitio principii*.

Without disparaging in any degree the value of Tennant's comments here, I may say (incidentally) that the *petitio principii* is perhaps the most obvious of all the fallacies that can arise in the course of an argument such as I have formulated; naturally therefore it was one of the first considerations that arose in my own mind. But I am still of the opinion that I have escaped that fatal error. For the basis of Tennant's objection, as I understand it, is that all mechanism, simply in virtue of the definition which I have given it, "is mind-ordered, the expression of mind". But this is by no means my standpoint, nor have I anywhere suggested this. On the contrary, I have merely pointed out, to begin with, a simple and obvious fact of ordinary experience—that is that human beings, in order to control or dominate their natural environment, must always manufacture some kind of machine or mechanism;² and whether this is simple or intricate, personally manipulated or purely automatic, is plainly a subordinate matter which does not affect my primary principle; although until this advance to complex automatism is taken, man's mastery over Nature must remain at the crude levels of savagery. But neither this fact, nor any of the other features rela-

¹ July 1926, p. 437.

² *Personality and Reality*, p. 120; Tennant himself uses "creates"—a minor but still important difference; cf. further below, p. 52, note.

ting to the advancing knowledge and skill of mankind, constitutes (as Tennant suggests) a *definition* of mechanism in the sense that it is, essentially and inherently, "mind-ordered" or even expressive of mind; and as a matter of fact I have also distinctly maintained that the direct converse of this principle—that is that Nature's own mechanisms may *not* in any degree be "mind-ordered"—is itself one of the logical alternatives which must always be taken into consideration. It is indeed, as is well known, the alternative to which philosophic materialism has hitherto exclusively adhered, and has thereby seriously weakened its own defences by altogether ignoring the rival theory whose validity would be fatal to its own conclusions.¹

My complete argument therefore depends not on the principle that any type of mechanism, as mechanism, must necessarily be related to mind, but rather that *self-evolving* mechanism must be so related; since all material mechanisms, simply in being *material*, are absolutely incapable of such self-evolution.² It appears to me that to this further issue Tennant has not done justice; but as it is impossible to recapitulate my detailed contention here, I can add only that (in my own opinion) we are actually concerned with neither definitions nor *a priori* assertions; and as this is sufficient to rebut the

¹ This point is so important that I may cite my remarks here: "materialism and naturalism have overlooked this alternative; they have restricted themselves to the principle that the only logical implication of the perfect mechanism of the natural world is the total *absence* of any directive mind; such a conclusion is radically fallacious because it omits an *equally logical* alternative inference"; *ibid.* p. 151. It is surely plain from this that my own account of mechanism, far from being an *a priori* definition, is nothing more than a "logical alternative"; while on p. 153 I exclude all *a priori* methods.

² Cf. MacCurdy, with reference to nervous processes, *Common Principles*, pp. 153, 154.

foundation of Tennant's criticism it becomes unnecessary to pursue his additional strictures, beyond emphasizing afresh the literalness of the "mechanical" aspects of the physical world. For in this vitally important respect we have to deal not with structures that are merely *analogous* to humanity's mechanisms, but with mechanism in the literal sense of the term. Under certain conditions, as Jeans has pointed out, the atom is a "true perpetual motion machine"; and similarly A. V. Hill asserts that "muscles, as indeed all living cells, are really chemical machines".¹ These scientific declarations place the literally mechanical aspects of matter beyond dispute; so that in spite of the vast contrasts between them there exists an undeniably actual identity, of the most profound significance, between the mechanisms of man and those of Nature. Nor is this principle one whit weakened by the counter-suggestion that Nature presents aspects that must be regarded as super-mechanical. So far as this is true it plainly confirms my own final conclusions, so that I should be the last to reject it; while still further, such super-mechanical qualities may themselves necessitate others that are purely mechanical. It is obvious, for example, that every great railway system possesses, in its expert organization, a super-mechanical aspect indispensable to its efficiency; but this must not blind us to the equally obvious necessity of its strictly mechanical elements. Quite similarly, I am prepared to agree, as regards the material world; but in any case the mechanisms of Nature are mechanisms actually and not merely metaphorically.

4. We may revert then to the more detailed consideration of the progressive modes which the external or objective manifestations of the will must assume in order

¹ *The Universe Around Us*, p. 132; *Living Machinery*, p. 62.

that it may successfully fulfil its native function of dominating its environment; and again it may be observed that this objective aspect of the situation can never be severed from the subjective, since it is precisely in attaining such increased mastery that will becomes will in any true sense of the word. On this point, unfortunately, there prevails a good deal of confusion. Too frequently will is identified with mere obstinacy or with any intense desire for some given end, as when we speak *e.g.* of a "strong-willed child". Psychologically, however, this is quite inaccurate. For while the child's attention and efforts may all be concentrated on some definite action, still his will (in its proper sense) remains undeveloped until his knowledge and general experience have become both widely expanded and well organized. For it is precisely this advance which carries with it at the same time the evolution of the will proper; and this is equally true, *mutatis mutandis*, of many adults whose lack of experience and ignorance in themselves mean that their will, except in matters where they are somewhat expert, remains only at its lowest level. This becomes still clearer if we compare, *e.g.*, a savage chief who wants to take his tribe over a river with a modern admiral who wishes to transport a whole army to a foreign country. For in both cases alike there exist an intense desire and determination with all their allied emotions; but on the other hand, the trained and practised will of the one easily accomplishes tasks that are absolutely impossible to the other. Parallel instances are of course innumerable; and they really imply that the mind of the savage, the child and the unskilful adult includes only an *undeveloped* or rudimentary will; which again means that the will proper is as yet scarcely present at all, any more than the brain and heart are present as such in the young embryo.

Equally in the organism and in the mind, therefore, we are actually concerned with the far-reaching contrast between developed or fully evolved, and undeveloped or embryonic, stages; and although the psychological aspects of the subjective side of this contrast are extremely important and interesting, still it is best approached from the objective point of view. Recalling then the truth that, in principle, the will is identical with the self, we find that the activity of a developed will is always characterized by three essential features. In the first place it makes use of as large and efficient a mass of mechanism (either material or personal) as it can find available; secondly, it renders this instrumental mechanism as automatic as it possibly can; while the third feature becomes obvious in the systematic manufacture of new mechanisms whenever those already existing are found to be inadequate; such tool-making machines in their turn, again, becoming increasingly automatic.

But the outstanding objective feature which marks this entire advance of the developing will is the incessant expansion of its mechanical *automatisms*. This aspect of the situation is quite easily observable not only in material mechanisms, but equally in what may be described as social mechanisms—in those ever vaster and more complicated cooperative unities such as the civil and defensive, educational and commercial services which are indispensable to all high types of civilization, even though these institutions can never constitute civilization itself; nevertheless they are essential to its maintenance and efficiency on any large scale.¹ The familiar objection that they are rapidly becoming far too mechanical, in the sense that they reduce personality to the level of a mere cog in the machine, is in itself ample proof of my argument

¹ Cf. Marriott's *Mechanism of the Modern State*.

that such automatism is absolutely necessary for the efficient functioning of the dominating will, whether this be the will of an individual or of society, and whether it be morally good or morally bad. In practice of course this despotism of the machine is mitigated to some degree by the progressive delegation of authority, and—with authority—of untrammelled initiative and independence. The final result of this is perhaps best exemplified in the fighting forces with their hierarchy of ranks each enjoying its carefully graded degree of power, which steadily diminishes until the lowest levels possess scarcely any liberty of action whatever, being mere unreflecting instruments of the superior will.

We are not concerned here, however, with the merits and demerits of such social organizations. The constant recurrence of dictatorships, like those of Napoleon and Mussolini or Lenin, suffices to prove the persistence of this universal tendency to convert all the instruments of the dominant self into purely automatic instruments; while even the natural rebellion against such rulers is only additional evidence of the inherent desire of every self, *as a self*, for at least some degree of dominance. For the freedom that is thus sought always means, of course, freedom to act as efficiently as appears possible to the individual in question, or in other terms to exert one's own dominance instead of submitting to an alien dominance dictated from without; and in every case of legislative bodies struggling to escape from foreign control all these features become perfectly obvious.

Thus we perceive that the ultimate aim of evolving personality, as this manifests itself in will, is the production and control of as large a mass of automatic mechanism as possible such as is exemplified in the recently invented self-winding watch. Consciously or

unconsciously, for high motives or for low, this forms one main governing ideal of all its efforts; and the final result once again reflects itself in that continuous and radical transformation which personality, in acquiring its steadily increasing dominance, itself undergoes. For we must here recall the fundamental difference between the essential nature of selfhood and the essential nature of the vast proportion of its environment. Selfhood is psychical—mental—even spiritual; the environment is physical or material. The former possesses all the attributes and inexhaustible potentialities of rational consciousness; the latter, inconceivably marvellous though it is, nevertheless lies fettered in the grip of unrelaxed physical necessity; so that in spite of its incalculable extent and intricacy, it remains at best merely an unconscious machine.¹ Now these outstanding characteristics of the situation mean that, from the very outset—from the first appearance of consciousness—there exists an almost absolute contrast, as it were, between mind and its physical environment; a contrast which no philosophic theory, I suppose, has yet successfully bridged and which indeed may never be bridged at all. But it at once follows therefore that in pursuing its inherent tendency towards dominance over its environment, every step which the developing personality takes in the direction of increasing and perfecting its own indispensable instrumental automatisms necessarily deepens that initial contrast, and incessantly widens that ever present chasm, between those automatisms and personality itself. As these sink in the scale of value and of being, selfhood rises; while it continuously ascends they descend; as its freedom unceasingly expands, theirs

¹ I may refer to my fuller discussion of this subject in *The Philosophic Basis of Moral Obligation*, Index, "Determination" and "Freedom"; cf. also p. 27 *ante*.

becomes more and more restricted; in its social aspects we may consider the relation *e.g.* between an exceptionally ruthless dictator and his hapless subjects. Any objection that we are here concerned with a scale of only relative values is too futile to merit discussion. For while the scale of a thermometer must certainly be relative, still the difference between absolute zero and internal stellar temperatures nevertheless retains an unquestionable absoluteness. If now to all this we add the further truth that the evolution of selfhood, as I have repeatedly insisted, is in principle inexhaustible, the final outcome of this unceasing tendency, with its inseparable increasing contrast, becomes obvious. For the advancing personality steadily assumes an ever greater degree of its own inherent nature. It becomes, in other words, *more* psychical, more spiritual, more dominant and free than ever before; or in negative terms, less mechanical, less automatic, less restricted in its activities, less dominated by anything external to its own deliberate choice and decision; and this again means that it enjoys that progressively wider liberty to pursue its own specific ends which in its turn demands, as its best instruments, still more efficient automatisms; and thus the primal contrast in their essential nature between selfhood and its material environment rapidly becomes deeper and deeper, verging in the end upon an actual transcendence—a transcendence at once in character, in status and in function.

5. Perhaps the clearest instance of this general principle is provided by the modern astronomer. For even his body is automatically moved as the dome circles around, so that his mind, thus released from the necessity of altering the position of his instruments, enjoys complete liberty for its natural work of observation and comparison. In this

respect the astronomer, I suppose, is exceptionally favoured; but the same tendency is readily observable in all modern scientific apparatus, just as it would be, in quite another direction, if an able statesman commanded an unusually devoted body of faithful and efficient subordinates ready to carry out his detailed schemes. Here again we should have a personality free to ponder the conditions of his nation's well-being without being harassed, as every ruler unfortunately is, by being compelled to supervise the actual working of the social machine; while in every highly successful commercial undertaking something approaching this ideal must often occur. All we need do further, then, is to consider the conditions which necessarily attend the complete attainment of such an ideal; and we shall find that as personality thus continuously evolves, its activities must become more and more truly *creative*; or in other terms, will inevitably become *creative will*.

At this point it may, however, be objected that, in this respect, the appeal to mechanism is leading us altogether in the wrong direction. For it is generally admitted that one of the highest levels of selfhood is found in artistic experience, with its characteristic creativeness. But every artist, still further, appears to dispense with mechanism almost completely, so far at least as the essentials of his work are concerned; and its introduction is always extremely distasteful to him because it is destructive of the finest possible results. His entire activity, it is insisted, must therefore be the very reverse of mechanical—must be creative in the sense of being spontaneous and free; so that we seem forced to conclude that mechanism and true creativeness are not intimately related but are fundamentally antagonistic to each other.

I shall defer the detailed discussion of the relation

between art and mechanism, however, to the succeeding chapter, where I hope to show that while the foregoing attitude towards art is thoroughly sound, still its usual presentation exhibits a seriously inadequate and short-sighted idea of what mechanism really is. Here it will be sufficient to expand still further the illustration already provided by the astronomer's relation to the delicate automatism which he utilizes for his purely intellectual research. For this is plainly typical of the *universal* relation between the thinking mind and all its instruments; while it must always be remembered (once again) that the "thinking mind", being essentially and strenuously active, is inseparable from an advanced type of will and therefore, in virtue of the identity of will and self, equally inseparable from a complex and dynamic personality. From this standpoint, in short, we perceive that the evolution of mechanism towards its highest levels of automatism naturally increases the freedom, the power and the status of the dominating mind or—in the present connection—the dominating will to which this mechanical evolution is itself in the first instance due; and resuming here the attempt to express "the conditions which attend the complete attainment of the ideal", we now find that these must finally culminate in a will that is absolutely released from the necessity of adjusting and controlling its automatically working instruments, and which is thus enabled to devote itself exclusively to altogether higher ends. To pursue my earlier example, which must now become painfully crude, we obtain as it were a super-astronomer who has no need whatever to interrupt his intellectual activities merely in order to attend to his apparatus, simply because this is so perfectly self-acting—and therefore, be it noted, inconceivably complex—that it fulfils of itself his every requirement; perhaps

the use of dictaphones is another good example of such a situation, or the control tower of a modern battleship.

If then the term "transcendence" is to have any intelligible meaning at all, I think its application here is fully justified. For a will, or more truly a self, which is thus related to its own instrumental mechanisms must obviously transcend those mechanisms to an infinite degree. In other words, that fundamental contrast between mind and matter which exists from the very dawn of consciousness¹ has now become so immeasurably widened that the essential attributes of the one are all lacking to the other. For in the one case there exist intelligence, will, purpose and freedom, each of which is perfect; in the other equally complete unconsciousness, mechanism and necessity. Philosophically, indeed, it may be possible to carry this distinction still further, so as to add space-time to these purely physical characteristics, while timelessness or eternity pertains to the spiritual; but this suggestion is too technical to be pursued here. From such a standpoint, in any case, it becomes easy to appreciate the justice of Laplace's claim that to him the hypothesis of God was quite superfluous. For this conclusion logically follows from the very conditions of the situation, since all his scientific investigations were strictly confined to a sphere wherein no essentially divine attributes could ever be *directly* discerned; and so far as the purely physical sciences are concerned, this must always remain true. Perfect selfhood of this supreme order, again, transcends not only its material instruments, but to an almost equal degree even the highest level of human personality in exactly the same sense, though on a far wider scale, that the mind of an astronomer observing an eclipse, in order

¹ P, 47 *ante*.

to test the Theory of Relativity, transcends that of the terror-struck savage.

6. To carry this discussion further would be merely to repeat my earlier arguments on the subject. I need add only that in passing from the lowest of such levels to those far above it, we are dealing with a literal "transformation" of selfhood which, however, never involves its final disappearance but on the contrary its perfect consummation—its complete attainment of its always inherent nature;¹ and we may now apply these conclusions to our subject proper—the Revelation of Deity.

For we must here revert to another aspect of the situation already alluded to—that is the *manufacture* of new mechanisms that are better fitted to serve the ever expanding purposes of the self. This, like all the other activities of personality, incessantly increases in its efficiency, until modern tool-making machines take the highest rank as regards their combined accuracy, delicacy and automatism equally for practical and for purely scientific ends. It appears to me, then, that this marked advance is best described as the transition from mere manufacture to Creation, although it must at once be admitted that we can never comprehend the actual details of truly creative activity; at best we can obtain only the faintest hints and the vaguest suggestions wherein analogy, always defective as it is, shows at its worst.² But despite all these disadvantages, we may readily perceive certain highly significant tendencies even in the

¹ Just as the "transmutation" of the caterpillar into the butterfly, with its "emergent" powers of flight and habits of feeding, can be directly observed, so the "transmutation" of the infant into the scientist can be traced, while the parallel advance in the race can be fairly accurately inferred; *cf.* note p. 22 *ante*.

² On Analogy as such *cf.* the first section of this chapter. We may also note Dr. Tennant's use of "create" (*ante*, p. 41, note).

progress of the governing conditions of manufacture. For as regards their space and time aspects, it is obvious that modern manufacturing methods are rapidly expanding in their range, while at the same moment they are being incessantly "speeded up"; the best instances of this, I suppose, being furnished by those enormous factories which produce an incredible number of motor-cars every day. Now whatever "Creation" actually means, universality and instantaneity of operation are usually regarded as two of its essential characteristics; or in simpler terms, to say that the world was created generally implies that it sprang into existence, in its entirety, in a single moment. Now if we accept this interpretation it is obvious that the rapid construction of an automobile, when compared with the arduous hacking of a savage's canoe, is a distinct approximation towards "creation" in the above sense; and while I have no desire to insist on familiar conceptions which, just in being familiar, may easily become deceptive, the recent reproduction of illustrations by wireless transmission—an achievement as yet only in its crudest stages—furnishes a suggestive parallel to "creation out of nothing", whatever this really means. If in fact it is the case, as some physicists used to maintain, that there actually exists no ether whatever, then, without unduly straining the point, this parallel plainly becomes still closer, while it is further strengthened by the complete annihilation of the atom which seems to occur under those exceptional conditions when electron and proton unite with each other. This annihilation, in truth, really consists in the transformation of matter into radiant energy. But however this may be, the atom as such disappears; and with the atom, of course, the very foundation of the material universe as we know it. It becomes a quite feasible suggestion therefore, that

the reverse process of transforming radiation into atomic matter may occur; and this may with equal justice be termed "creation" as Sir James Jeans has recently done: "the atoms must have begun to exist at some time not infinitely remote, and this leads us to contemplate a definite event . . . of creation of matter".¹

Finally then, the force and value of all these considerations are cumulative, so that when taken all together they quite logically justify the concept of the perfection of the divine will as expressing or revealing itself, creatively, in the making of the entire physical universe as that ageless and perfect mechanism which modern science shows it to be. For we have found that selfhood, as such, always manifests itself in and through the activity of dynamic will, thereby maintaining and increasing the dominance of personality over its environment. Throughout all human experience this is effected by the production of mechanisms which unceasingly become more and more perfectly automatic; and in this manner both the efficiency and the freedom of the self are expanded, while at the same time the self is rendered increasingly transcendent as compared with its own instrumental mechanisms. Hence two further noteworthy consequences arise: (a) a progressive change in the methods of manufacture which carries this nearer and nearer to the familiar idea of creation; (b) a parallel transformation in the character of personality, which I have illustrated by the case of the modern astronomer. In this way, therefore, we obtain a definite and quite logical concept of the characteristics which must mark the dynamic manifestation of a fully developed or perfect will. For this would necessarily produce, or more truly create, mechanisms of an incalculable

¹ *Nature*, vol. 122, p. 698.

complexity and delicacy which would at the same time be completely automatic.

If therefore mechanisms of this character actually exist, they must logically be regarded as such a "dynamic manifestation of perfect will". But as I have already insisted, the physical universe does undeniably possess these marvellous mechanical characteristics or aspects. Every atom and every molecule, and possibly indeed every electron, are incalculably intricate and absolutely automatic mechanisms, incessantly radiating throughout their surrounding energy-fields; whence it at once follows that the whole material universe, and similarly the entire space-time continuum, constitute in their combination a single unified mechanism of the unique type referred to. If then we carry the foregoing considerations to their logical conclusion, the physical universe, alike in its minutest constituents and in its unimaginable entirety, must be regarded as the sphere of manifestation of perfect will; or in other terms, as the sphere of the Revelation of Deity under the form of divinely creative will.

It must be observed that my discussion is limited throughout to the material or physical universe, and is not intended to apply to the Universe in its widest sense of the whole of Reality or of Existence. This simple but important point seems to have been overlooked by Professor Boodin when he objects that "science to-day does not regard the universe as a mechanism".¹ But his criticism plainly involves a careless confusion between the material universe, with which alone my present argument has been concerned, and the Universe as a whole of Being;² and that the latter is a mechanism, and nothing more, I have never suggested and have never dreamt of suggest-

¹ *The Personalist*, vol. x, p. 139.

² Cf. Preface, p. 5.

ing. But on the other hand, the concept of mechanism is obviously perfectly familiar, and is indeed indispensable, to current scientific thought; and this, still further, not only in the domain of physics and chemistry. For biologists do not hesitate to employ it. Sir Arthur Keith *e.g.* affirms that "the *machinery* which regulates the behaviour of groups of cells within the body of the embryo is one of the utmost complexity". Similarly Dr. Crew points out that "the precision exhibited in inheritance demands a very precise and complex hereditary *mechanism*".¹ Even psychologists apply the same standpoint to a marked degree. "In any competent theory purpose and *mechanism* explain each other mutually; they should never be mutually exclusive", observes Dr. MacCurdy;² while Lotze's treatment of the status of mechanism in the Universe is familiar to all students of philosophy. In these respects, therefore, Boodin's assertion that "science does not regard the universe as a mechanism" is either quite unfounded or quite irrelevant.

To this it must be added that Nature's mechanisms can under no conditions reveal their own creative source *directly*, for the very reason that they are perfectly automatic; on the contrary, they constitute a realm of existence which, from one fundamentally important point of view, must absolutely *conceal* the creative source. With this aspect of the situation, however, I have already dealt

¹ *Nature*, vols. 112, p. 260, and 120, p. 733; *cf.* further p. 17 *ante*, note 1, and Dr. Needham on "Mechanistic Biology" in *Science, Religion and Reality*, pp. 221 *sqq.*, and in his *Man a Machine* (*italics* here my own).

² *Common Principles in Psychology and Physiology*, p. 8; *cf.* also Professor Whitehead's references to "evolutionary machinery" and "organic mechanism" in *Science and the Modern World*; and the details of organic mechanical structures in *Nature*, vol. 125, p. 315; further, the quotation from Ernest Newman, p. 66 below.

in *Personality and Reality*,¹ so that it would be superfluous to repeat here my earlier arguments; and before resuming the subject I shall discuss the confirmation which these conclusions receive from the content of artistic experience.

¹ Chap. vii, sect. 4; also below p. 73.

III

ART, MECHANISM AND CREATION

I. WE must now recur to the difficulty, already mentioned in the preceding chapter, arising from the fundamental antagonism that appears to subsist between great art and the use of automatic mechanism. For the artist, we found, "appears to dispense with mechanism almost completely"; and since it is in artistic activity that human selfhood unquestionably attains one of its highest possible levels, this fact seems to invalidate my argument that Deity, as the supreme type of creative personality, can effectively—though at the same time only indirectly—reveal Himself in any form of mechanism whatever. Creation proper (this objection continues) must be anti-thetic to all mechanism and all automatism, just as absolutely as art is supposed to be; and even though a certain element of manufacture must always intrude itself into the aesthetic activity, still this extrinsic factor becomes more and more subordinate as pure art itself advances.

But in spite of the apparent force of these contentions I shall now maintain that it is, on the contrary, precisely in the realm of great art that we find still weightier and more significant suggestions in support of my own position. For if we ask why we feel compelled thus to insist that true art is essentially creative—why the artist instinctively resents any imputation of mere manufacture, necessary though this always remains to some degree—and why we discover in this attitude one ultimate and infallible criterion of pure art—we find the answer in the principle that, from the specifically aesthetic viewpoint, to manufacture implies that one is to a marked

extent *subordinated* to one's material, while to produce a work of art, on the contrary, is to *dominate* the material, and this the more effectively as art itself progresses; and since manufacture always seems to be inseparable from mechanical and soulless reproduction, the familiar antithesis between art and mechanism inevitably acquires its almost indestructible hold on the modern mind. Once again then we have to deal with the cardinal principle of dominance.

It may seem that we are confronted here with the old problem of matter and form, and that the artistic function proper always consists in dominating matter by endowing it with some unique, and therefore creative, form. This appears to me to be fundamentally true, in the sense that we are concerned throughout with the question of what is essential, and what is non-essential, to art as such. Now some kind of matter is obviously indispensable, not only as providing the medium wherein the artist must work, but still further as dictating in a marked degree the methods he must employ and the style to which he must conform. But vitally important though these considerations must always be, still they yield no more than the governing *conditions* of artistic activity; they do not, that is to say, constitute the fundamental *nature* of that activity. For even when all these necessary conditions exist, it is not until the artist himself comes upon the scene and takes them in hand, so to speak, that any properly *aesthetic* product can arise; and without pursuing the more technical aspects of this difficult subject, it is sufficient for my present purpose to insist that this essentially aesthetic quality (or attribute or effect, or any similar term) can have its primary origin only in those highest types of mind or experience which constitute a *personal* experience (or self) that is always of an

extremely complex and well-organized kind. For it should be obvious that the mind of every great artist must possess, in close alliance with his specifically aesthetic powers, both intellectual and dynamic qualities of the finest possible order—must enjoy a dual capacity, in the first place to conceive or to imagine, and in the second to execute or realize; so that unless this typical psychic combination exists there may be high promise but there will be no performance, simply because the individual's native powers, as so frequently occurs, prove insufficient to overcome the serious difficulties which attend his obscure beginnings. In the end he ceases to struggle, while another, with perhaps lower artistic ability but greater determination, ultimately achieves fame.

Creative art then, *as* creative, and as distinguished from its matter, is always the realization or actualization¹ of something that can first of all originate only from or within selfhood; and it makes no difference to this result that the entire aesthetic process may seem to be spontaneous, "instinctive" or even unconscious. Any adequate discussion of the subject's technicalities demands however a much fuller consideration of these features than is here possible. It must therefore suffice to observe that whatever may be the psychological character of the initial or underlying processes, the *final* stages—the "finishing touches"—must always be much more deliberate and much more critical than is perhaps usually admitted. But every great artist, at some stage or other, "stands away" from his own work in order to survey and criticize it, as its frequently drastic recasting plainly proves; and in so doing his conscious activity assumes a form that is

¹ It is instructive to give these terms their literal meaning of "making real" or "making actual"; of course it must also be recognized that the creative self and its inner ideals are no less real—a point too often ignored.

in essence intellectual, distinct though it certainly remains from the specific activity of "thought" in the ordinary sense of the term. But this only shows that the ordinary sense is far too narrow. For when we examine still more closely the nature of the artist's self-critical attitude, we find it to consist in the comparison, more or less deliberate as the case may be, between the actually achieved result—the picture or drama or symphony—and that inner compelling ideal or vision which the great artist is incessantly striving to express. Within his own mind this subjective, but none the less imperative ideal confronts him in what he often feels to be its wholly unrealizable perfection; and this brings to light another feature of equal importance which, however, too seldom receives proper appreciation. For part at least of the supreme difficulty of all great artistic work attends the adequate expression of the delicate and intricate *detail* of its governing ideal. The artist is therefore in unceasing, and sometimes indeed vain, pursuit of the "exact shade", of the precise word or phrase, of that quintessential difference in short which, infinitesimal though it is, at the same time makes all the difference; and in these diverse respects his final aim, curiously enough, becomes identical with the final aim of a markedly contrasted type of mind—that is of the mathematician; for he also seeks the same absolute exactitude combined with the same final exhaustiveness.¹

2. Now this last feature of the situation plainly brings us again into touch with the proverbial opposition between art and mechanism. For that consummate precision of

¹ "I have always thought of a mathematician as an *observer* who notes down his observations. . . . That the finite cannot understand the infinite should surely be a theological and not a mathematical war-cry. . . . Mathematical truth or falsity is absolute." Professor G. H. Hardy, *Mind*, vol. xxxviii, pp. 18, 5, 4.

expression which every great artist achieves in one way, and every great mathematician in another, obviously finds its very close parallel in the exactitude of many delicate modern mechanisms, especially those now employed in scientific research either practical or purely theoretical. It is now possible, I believe, to measure accurately the billionth of an inch, an electric current of one seven-millionth *ampère*, and also a change in temperature of one thousandth of a degree; while some apparatus is sensitive enough to discriminate directly the amounts of heat radiated from different regions of the surface of Mars.¹ Here then we discover the clue to the solution of our problem, since it is obvious (in the first place) that there exists a striking contrast between the extremely intricate modern mechanisms just referred to and the painfully crude devices of earlier times. Now the clear realization of this marked advance, far from being exhausted as it is, plainly necessitates a drastic revision of our ordinary ideas of the character and capacity of mechanism, as such, and of which civilization is only beginning to realize the potentialities. Inevitably of course, but in the present connection most unfortunately, popular ideas have been derived from the endless varieties of industrial machinery; but all these must invariably be mechanical in the poorest sense of this term. Hence there has naturally resulted the prevailing disparagement of the mechanical as such, since it is generally supposed to be essentially antagonistic to all initiative and independence—an aspect of the situation that has already been referred to. But it must now be observed that this is true only of the relatively *simplest types* of mechanism and

¹ Similar instances are the production of the faintest lines on stellar spectrograms, and the use of the spectroheliometer; while engineering fittings can be adjusted to the ten-thousandth of an inch.

automatism; and wonderful though the machines in common use undeniably are, still they cannot be said to have reached any very high level. Already they are being rapidly superseded, so that their future, if they enjoy one at all, will be only in some museum of antiquities; while still further (as I have argued already) this continuous advance in mechanical efficiency, far from destroying all initiative as it is believed to do, is actually one of the most effective means of expanding it, as (once again) in the case of the astronomer. What then is the *real* significance of this unceasing evolution of mechanism? It must be found, I believe, in the steady approximation that is thus being made, though at a very slow rate, to the exquisitely delicate and complex mechanisms of Nature—of the atom and the living cell, the molecule and crystal, or indeed the visible mechanisms of plant and animal bodies in their entirety; the recent research of Bose in this connection is sufficiently familiar. For it is in these, and not in the still crude devices of man's own making, that the finest ideals of mechanical construction and efficiency must be sought; and since it is quite impossible to ignore their literally mechanical aspects, no matter how extreme a Vitalism may be adopted, to repudiate the use of the term "mechanism", as is so often done in the supposed interests of life, art and freedom, is really quite illogical.¹ The truth is then that not mechanism *as such*, but only its most rudimentary types, can become inimical to spiritual liberty; while the more

¹ This standpoint must not be taken to imply that life is exhaustively mechanical. All that my argument requires is the recognition that life and even mind exhibit undeniably mechanical aspects or foundations inseparable from their own functioning. Similarly with art—*cf.* end of the present section; also Bosanquet, *Principle of Individuality*, Lect. IV, sects. 6, 7, and note 1, p. 56 *ante*.

perfect and more efficient types, on the contrary, form the indispensable basis of that liberty. Even in the realm of animal life it is precisely the fine, yet at the same time firm, mechanism of its wings that has given the bird its freedom to fly, and thus to escape that earth-bound captivity of its reptilian ancestors to which all wingless species of birds once more revert. I do not suggest, of course, that even Nature's mechanisms suffice to account completely for life, much less for consciousness, although there is much to be said for this point of view.¹ But here it is quite unnecessary to insist on this hypothesis, since what has occurred in the evolution of the bird has repeated itself, *mutatis mutandis*, in the evolution of man himself. For the dawn of his rudimentary rationality, which alone elevated him above the level of the brutes, was inseparably linked with the advancing coordination of his hands and eyes and brain—that is, in truth, with the advancing intricacy of the structure and functions of his neuro-muscular *mechanisms*.²

It should now be quite obvious that the artist, like the bird, is always absolutely dependent on the same complex system of organic mechanisms, the only essential difference being that in his case these have attained a far higher level of delicacy and—therefore—of sensitiveness. It is true that the artist—again like the bird—controls these neuro-muscular adjustments quite subconsciously or (as is often said) “instinctively”; but this makes no difference to the fact that he *does* control them, while in both instances alike some measure of more or less deliberate

¹ “On the physical side mechanistic conceptions are perfectly adequate.” Needham in *Science, Religion and Reality*, p. 250; cf. previous note.

² Cf. Professor Elliot Smith's *Evolution of Man*. All students of biology, again, are familiar with the delicacy of the microscopic mechanisms associated with reproduction and heredity.

training has much to do with assured success. The delicate touch of the painter and musician, the sculptor's visual judgments of symmetry and proportion, the composer's sense of tone and rhythm, all alike therefore depend absolutely on the unimpaired functioning of the mechanical aspects of the respective bodily organs; while their extreme susceptibility to injury by drugs or disease is further evidence in the same direction, since these impair in the first instance the fine precision of organic adjustments.¹ Finally, that apparent ease with which genius so bafflingly achieves its immortal creations is the result, in part at least, of the natural spontaneity of the requisite sequence of neuro-muscular coordinations; and this sequence, in principle, plainly forms a mechanism of an extremely high order of intricate accuracy.

Far from being entirely independent of mechanism therefore (as he is usually supposed to be) the artist is actually more dependent upon it than any other individual; for while the engineer can always fall back upon makeshifts whenever his material automatism breaks down—as society also does *e.g.* during a strike—the artist is quite helpless if his bodily mechanisms fail him. Nor can he ever dispense completely with mechanisms that are more or less artificial. The savage drum is obviously a simple mechanism, partly natural and partly manufactured; the primitive reed and harp are others; but when we compare these with the modern piano or organ or violin, and still more with any large orchestra, once again we find exactly the same advance as before manifested in their inseparably combined intricacy, delicacy and automatism as being the indispensable *mechanical*

¹ It is almost superfluous to refer to the familiar disturbances of speech and posture due to intoxication; even the supposed stimulating influence of alcohol is only an additional instance of the same effects.

requisites of all artistic efficiency. Some people, indeed, find promise of true art in even the wholly automatic pianola and gramophone; but this is a debatable question which I hesitate to pursue. Turning however to the purely psychical aspect of the situation, we must accept Mr. Ernest Newman's recent dictum that "all composers' minds are more or less unconscious mechanisms. To some extent, indeed, this must be true of all artists".¹ Here, then, since we find mechanism enshrined in the very core of aesthetic creativeness, the supposed antithesis between mechanism and art completely disappears.

3. It is now a comparatively simple matter to summarize these considerations and apply them to our specific problem. The first and outstanding conclusion must be that as personality continues to develop, it thereby incessantly becomes, not simply more dynamic and dominant, but also more *creative*. For its highest activities, in essence, constitute the actualizing² of those ever new ideas which the mind continuously originates—a process which itself becomes more and more deliberately controlled as mind advances, as is patent in many instances of human genius alike as inventive and as aesthetic. Conversely again, all such truly creative activity can originate only within the experience of a self, since the governing intellectual and artistic ideals which thus become realized can arise nowhere else than in the consciousness of a self of an extremely high order.

Such a general statement, however, must tend to conceal the extreme complexity which the creative function always actually exhibits. But "creation", nevertheless, need not be given its usual meaning of unintelligible mystery; for (as we have seen) it is justly applicable to many of the highest stages of human experience, while

The Unconscious Beethoven, p. 79.

² Cf. note p. 60 *ante*.

at the same time its nature, to some extent at least, can be discerned by psychological analysis. Creation must therefore be regarded as the complex dynamic activity of a yet more complex self. Not only does the artist, but also the pure thinker and the able statesman, create. Just as Beethoven created his symphonies, so Darwin created his theory of natural selection, and Newton that of gravitation; similarly with the policies, or even indeed the nations of Bismarck and Cavour.¹ Throughout its entire range and in all its types (in the second place) creativeness is most intimately allied with mechanisms; and these, in possessing an intricacy comparable to creativeness itself, are adequately fitted to serve as its indispensable instruments, whereby alone—if we prefer this way of expressing the situation—it is enabled to confer “form” upon “matter”. It is only necessary, therefore, to elevate the evolution of selfhood to its highest possible level to perceive that divine activity must be supremely creative in an analogous sense, but on a scale of operation, and with an instantaneity and perfection, far transcending anything the human mind can conceive or imagine. Yet in spite of this insuperable difficulty a few suggestive analogies present themselves which merit, I think, a little further consideration.

We may find then, in the first place, a helpful parallel between the relation of man to his physical environment on the one hand, and the relation of Deity to the entire physical universe on the other. If man were a disembodied or “pure” spirit this problem would be appreciably

¹ “How then shall we estimate the intellect of Newton, who finding comparatively flimsy foundations, instead of merely strengthening them and erecting on them such a building as they can sustain, digs them out, goes down to bed-rock, lays his foundation securely, and then erects a noble edifice, an imperishable proof of unparalleled genius?” (J.M. Child, in *Isaac Newton*, p. 129).

simplified, since under actual conditions it is extremely difficult to distinguish clearly between the relation of the physical organism in itself, and the relation of human personality as such, to their respective environments. Generally the body and the self are so closely identified with each other that both psychological and philosophic theory become hopelessly confused. But man's body, being obviously a part of the material world, should therefore be regarded as an element in the material environment of the self, even though it occupies a unique place and fulfils unique functions in that environment; while in the reverse direction the self, again as such, is plainly responsive to purely psychical influences and also to what are best described as the spiritual aspects of Reality, of which the body can never be conscious, even though it serves as the means whereby the self proper is affected. It is however impossible to embark upon any adequate discussion of the mind-body problem; but whatever theory is adopted as to their interconnection, the essential, and indeed almost absolute, distinction between the course of psychic experience on the one hand and the sequence of physiological processes on the other, must be maintained. Even if it is denied that the former can ever of themselves constitute a self, as forming any distinctive entity, or if the still more extreme position is preferred that consciousness is nothing more than the epiphenomenal effect of cerebral changes, still their mutual identification is only rank confusion.

From my own standpoint, on the contrary, man's bodily organization must be regarded as the physical instrument, or more accurately mechanism, which the self employs in order to maintain its contact with, and its control over, the material world. However we may seek to account for it, this fact itself is undeniable: the

fingers and muscles, the ear and the brain, of every great violinist *e.g.* being the means of his artistic triumphs precisely as the violin itself is; and not of his only, but similarly of the composer's.¹ And the mystery of this connection between the spiritual self and its physical instruments is lessened to some degree if we recall the principle that the self thus becomes enabled to command all the unquestionable advantages of complex mechanisms, such as the violin and other musical instruments plainly are. For as I have previously insisted, it is just their commonest qualities—their ordinary durability and comparative rigidity²—which enable the self to enjoy to the full its own capacities of spiritual freedom.

If now we add the simple fact that man incessantly strives to widen the range of all his material instruments—for even art cannot escape this tendency, as in the augmented modern orchestra—we obtain the analogy we require by envisaging the relation between Deity and the physical universe somewhat in the same general way, even though any such analogy must at its best remain crude and inadequate. The whole material world, which forms (it must here be remembered) one single unity in spite of its overwhelming vastness and eternity,³ thus becomes the instrument—it may be indeed in a sense the plaything—of Deity. Thus regarded, all its marvellous attributes appear as the forms of actualization of the divine ideas or thoughts, if we may venture to express this

¹ Cf. in fuller detail *Personality and Reality*, chap. v, sect. 3.

² That is of course as contrasted with the transience and plasticity of all mental processes and contents.

³ Here in the sense of temporal duration, not the higher sense of timelessness. On Unity cf. Eddington: "No doubt can be entertained that the genesis of the stars is a single process of evolution which has passed and is passing over a primordial distribution" (*The Nature of the Physical World*, p. 168).

truth in the only terms which the human mind can understand. Such an actualization in material forms and qualities, again, constitutes Creation; for (as I have maintained in the preceding chapter) it becomes possible, as man's mind slowly attains its higher levels, to trace some kind of approximation to creation even in human processes of manufacture, dimly reflecting as these do the intricacy and perfect efficiency of the mechanisms of Nature. To ourselves again, as we have repeatedly found, the sphere of art is essentially the sphere of creation. If then we include the exquisite beauty of the physical world and realize its intimate connection with the underlying mechanism, the significance and validity of such a concept of creation may be still better appreciated.¹

4. It is clear that creation and instrumentality introduce anew the problems of value and status, of purpose and immanence. I have already emphasized the continuous widening of the profound contrasts between mind and matter, as the first progressively reduces the second to the level of the automatically mechanical means for attaining its own spiritual ends.² All that is thus created, therefore, must inevitably occupy a lower position than its creator, or even than its manufacturer; the finest Strad *e.g.* must rank beneath both its maker and the genius who plays it. If then we press this principle to its furthest limit it may explain in some slight measure the perplexing absoluteness of this contrast between physical attributes, and psychical or spiritual attributes—between the spatio-temporal character of the former and the invisibility and intangibility of the latter. For to occupy space, to be visible and tangible, thus becomes

¹ Cf. again *Personality and Reality*, chap. xi; "Mechanism and Beauty."

² P. 48 *ante*.

the mark of a relatively inferior status in the scale of being; and the human self, as immaterial and as contrasted with its body, lacks these indications of inferiority. This holds true even of the products of the greatest art, since colour, sound, form and indeed all sensuous attributes pertain not to their creator but only to his work. There is therefore an undeniable aspect of actual transcendence of their own creations in all such instances of even human personality, "protozoan" as we have found this to be.¹ Infinitely truer then must this be as regards Deity; to be divine, to be even spiritual, of itself means to be intangible and invisible—perhaps indeed, to some degree, to be incomprehensible; although at the same time the spiritual, alike as artist and as Deity, can always manifest itself to some extent within the sphere of the sensuous.

But incalculably valuable though such manifestations of spirit must always be, nevertheless they all exhibit the serious defect of being, at their best, merely *indirect* revelations of their creative origin. Within human experience, of course, this defect is easily concealed by the intimate contact which must prevail between the artist and all his productions; for they are so often observed together that, instead of being sharply distinguished from each other as they really ought to be, they become on the contrary identified to such a degree that the artist's name is transferred to his pictures or compositions: this is a Landseer or Romney, this a Beethoven symphony. Now while this is perfectly natural, still it clearly shows that we never adequately realize that essential difference in nature and status between creator and creation—between spirit and its manifestations—on which I have just insisted. But as has been well pointed out. "No one

¹ Cf. *ante* p. 35.

can read what is written of, or by, Beethoven without feeling from what is told that a great part remains untold . . . an inner life that remains unrevealed. . . . One can grow very familiar with this music without feeling any real intimacy with the composer. (Brahms) remains intangible, and no thoughts of affection and reverence go seeking him."¹ On the other hand, whenever the author of an obviously fine work is quite unknown, it readily becomes clear that the work, which must now be considered purely in itself, can yield but slight indications of the actual character of its creator. How little is really known *e.g.* about Homer and Sappho, or of the writers of some of the finest religious literature. Even Shakespeare remains a largely unknown quantity to us; and this in spite of that distinctive mark which every great personality must leave on all its products; while in the almost impersonal sphere of manufactures and inventions we can find almost nothing to indicate their originators except by turning to historical and other extraneous sources.

Thus we need only apply these familiar considerations to the physical universe to perceive that our difficulties must become immeasurably intensified. For to the modern mind the exquisite beauty of the external world inevitably presents itself, first and foremost, as the beauty of a wholly impersonal—even of an unconscious—Nature. Contrasted with this all art, in one sense, is in the first place artificial and (still further) essentially personal; yet when we survey the beauty of Nature in its eternal and flawless perfection, neither of these inherent characters of art—neither artificiality nor personality—can anywhere be directly discerned.² The music is there, but

¹ Rorke, *A Musical Pilgrim's Progress*, pp. 60, 61, 83.

² Cf. p. 20 *ante*.

no composer; form and colour are there, with no painter nor sculptor; the lines are laid on the vastest of scales, yet there is no architect; so that only by imposing a severe strain upon itself can the thought of to-day accept, with any literalness, suggestions that found unhesitating expression in earlier days. To the ancients the heavens declared the glory of God; to the moderns they declare the laws of physics and the equations of mathematics. Heaven has thus been converted into the space-time continuum; and the splendid lines—

Look! how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold;
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins—

sound merely metaphorical, or even faintly ridiculous echoes of the simple piety of an outgrown age. Thus the artist can accept Laplace's dictum that the hypothesis of God is superfluous.¹

If then the beauty of Nature is thus essentially impersonal, still more so are the natural law and order which science increasingly discerns; while the yet more extreme position is often adopted that all these are really nothing more than the purely subjective contents of man's own mind which he instinctively, but nevertheless quite illogically, projects into the objective sphere of real existence. And when to all this we add the perfect automatism of the material world, our difficulties culminate in my own principle that such a world, endowed with its self-sufficient capacity for maintaining its own activities, inevitably conceals its Creator from direct observation. I have no desire therefore to criticize the general lines of argument just indicated; I agree, on the contrary, that

¹ Cf. p. 51 *ante*.

they must be unreservedly accepted. For they are simply the detailed expression of the general principle that, whether the material universe is regarded as mechanical or as aesthetic, as automatic or as sensuous, its marvellous attributes can constitute, at their highest, no more than an extremely indirect and distant revelation of the nature and activities of Deity. But such a revelation (as I have argued in my earlier volumes) the physical universe undeniably affords. It is attainable, however, only by means of a philosophic argument which must always remain beyond the competence of many people, convincing though I myself hold it to be. To say this, of course, is only to emphasize still further the irremediably *indirect character* of the type of revelation in question; nor can we escape this difficulty by advancing from non-living matter to the higher sphere of life, as is often done in connection with this problem. For in spite of life being an unquestionably "higher sphere", and in spite also of the profound differences between living organisms and non-living things, we cannot (in my opinion) exclude the possibility that the transition from the latter stage to the former has occurred by insensible degrees and has, therefore, been continuous throughout its whole extent. This justifies Whitehead's recent suggestion that research deals everywhere with "organisms" of various types: but it must nevertheless be recognized that the variety of "organisms" has an extremely wide range. Once again we find unbroken continuity inseparably linked with profound contrast, so that the patent differences between non-living "organisms" and the living remain exactly what they were before. The proposed extension of the meaning of the term "organism", therefore, does little (in other words) to explain the differences in question, while it cannot, of course, explain them away; and the word has in fact merely

been made equivalent to "system" in its sense of complex ordered arrangement or interrelation.

But the continuity which thus becomes emphasized implies, still further, that the mechanism and automatism of the purely physical world go very far (to say the least) towards explaining the nature of vital processes themselves. This does not mean, however, that the unique character of these processes is altered in the slightest degree, nor that Life has been reduced to the lower level of matter, nor (again) that evolutionary emergence is repudiated. But it does mean that we cannot find, even in the sphere of Life, any revelation of Deity that is markedly more *direct* and immediate than can be found in matter and energy as such. For all that we discover is a higher intricacy of structure and of function than exists anywhere in the non-living realm itself;¹ but this very intricacy, as I have just observed, is precisely what most effectively conceals the divine activity from direct observation. And since all these considerations apply with equal force to the beauty which so profusely decks the living world, in this respect also our enquiry into the character of divine revelation must plainly be carried still further.

¹ Cf. *ante* p. 17, note 2.

IV

DEGREES OF REVELATION

1. OUR conclusions hitherto may now be summarized somewhat as follows. We have found that the relation between selfhood and its entire environment is of so very complex a character that it is extremely difficult to grasp its main aspects clearly and concisely. This results from the fact that as selfhood gradually advances to its higher levels, its principal aspects undergo so thorough a transformation that their successive stages finally seem to contradict one another. The natural consequence is that the primary and simpler forms of personality are almost universally separated from, and even opposed to, its later and far higher forms, simply because their characteristic modes of activity appear to be so fundamentally different from each other. It is quite easy to observe this attitude within even the comparatively narrow range of human experience itself. For whenever the savage—or similarly the child—attributes to “magic” those actions of civilized man which he cannot himself understand, he really means—though, of course, his very mentality prevents him stating the situation in this way—that he feels himself confronted by a type of mind altogether different from his own; not merely *higher* than his own from the developmental point of view (which naturally he cannot appreciate), but *essentially* different; he would never dream, therefore, of attempting to explain the white man’s “medicine” and wireless in any terms of his own ordinary experience. From the reverse standpoint, again, the disdainful superiority of the white implies, at bottom, his subconscious realization that his achievements are not thus different in kind—not in any sense “magical”—

but are only of a more complex order than the primitive methods of savagery; and this plainly implies, still further, that the savage regards the white as "divine" simply because he is himself blind to that community of nature which, despite the enormous contrasts, actually underlies their respective types of selfhood, precisely as it does the diverse structures of caterpillar and butterfly.

Now when the philosopher contends that to attribute even the highest conceivable mode of personality to Deity is an altogether illegitimate anthropomorphism—or (to state this position in negative terms) that all the essentially divine qualities must be incomprehensible—he is, in fact, merely reproducing, on a somewhat higher plane, this familiar and in itself quite superficial attitude of the savage to the supposed "magic" of a superior mind. "I cannot understand," such a philosopher virtually says, "I cannot fully understand how certain extremely perplexing phenomena are brought about; I cannot comprehend their ultimate, nor often even their proximate, causes and conditions; they plainly differ *in toto* from all that I myself can do; and therefore", he concludes—exactly as does the savage—"their ground and origin must be either wholly impersonal or wholly superpersonal—either an impersonal Nature or an absolutely transcendent Deity".¹ The real character of this familiar intellectual attitude will perhaps become clearer if we imagine a child precocious enough to construct a systematic argument, but at the same time limited altogether to his simple childish toys. It is plain that his active but still immature mind would also inevitably pursue the same course of thought. "These wonderful chemical changes," he would say, "these strange electrical effects

¹ A developed agnosticism plainly carries the same implications.

and wireless communications cannot possibly be the work of a being like myself. This great picture could spring from no hand using crayons like mine, nor this statue from any moulder of plasticine; all such suggestions", he would finally urge, "are nothing but sheer paedomorphism"—sacrilegious or ridiculous according to his temperament. Nevertheless his conclusion, logical though it must seem to himself, is obviously only the result of employing far too restricted an idea of what personality actually is, since both child and savage are interpreting it exhaustively in terms of their own rudimentary experience. Of course their very mentality prevents their ever doing otherwise; the philosopher cannot however plead this excuse when he likewise assumes what is essentially a "paedomorphic" attitude and then proffers it as a negative but justifiable anthropomorphism, allied as this must logically become with those false views of transcendence that have already been criticized.

But as soon as we discard such childish interpretations of the situation, we readily perceive that the expanding dominance over its environment, which is the inalienable prerogative of advancing selfhood, must inevitably pursue the direction I have already indicated—that is towards an ever increasing creativeness. This we have found to hold true not only of all artistic activity, but to some degree even of industrial manufacture; and thus it becomes clear that while the mode of action of the highest type of selfhood must differ almost *in toto* from that of a much lower type, still the resultant contrasts, profound as they are, never subvert the persisting quality of selfhood; on the contrary they more and more fully express this. Finally, and perhaps still more perplexingly, we have also found that there exist certain conditions under which even creativeness itself must conceal the

creator from direct observation. This is true whether he is human or superhuman. For let us now imagine our precocious child, with his ingrained paedomorphism, entering a vast power-house and investigating its intricate and automatic machinery. Again he finds no mechanics, no perceptible human control, nothing in fact but a "world" of self-acting contrivances; and once more the natural and apparently logical result is the final confirmation of his obviously shallow paedomorphism.

But we have now become able, I believe, to perceive what such a limited mind can of itself never perceive—that is that this self-concealment of all creative personality really means its self-liberation—its enjoyment of a far higher degree of freedom to pursue its more congenial aims in its own native sphere. One familiar instance of this has already been cited—that of the astronomer in his slowly circling dome; and perhaps a great poet, utilizing his commonplace typewriter or dictaphone, yields another example as contrasted with the burdens imposed on Milton by his blindness. So far as art itself is concerned, indeed, we have also seen how little of the real personality of an unknown genius may actually be revealed in his own works, self-manifesting though these are usually supposed to be;¹ and in fact biographical details occasionally emerge which completely disprove the original estimate based on such works alone, so that once again we are tempted to regard personality (with Bradley and other thinkers) as essentially self-contradictory. But this is altogether too narrow a view of its nature; for the apparent self-contradiction is only the natural result of too superficial a survey and too inadequate an estimate of the actual complexity of even human personality; while the analogy with man's

¹ P. 72 *ante*, note 1.

primitive beliefs in the cruelty and despotism of Deity is patent.

2. We must now consider a further important aspect presented by these principles. We have just found that although creativeness is usually regarded as essentially self-revealing, still even artistic creativeness must under certain conditions become self-concealing. This is how such a situation must be described in the light of the creative activity itself; but when it is approached, on the other hand, from the observer's own point of view, then it must be given an alternative expression in terms of what has been created. From this additional standpoint then, it is plain that all those products which thus conceal the creative self are to an important degree foreign to the nature of that self, although they can never of course be completely foreign to it in the sense of being alien or hostile. But in spite of this qualification they remain foreign in the sense that they can never yield any *adequate* revelation of the creative personality in its fullness, nor at its highest possible levels; and this again is frequently true even within human experience, as when a poet writes in another language than his own, or a painter or sculptor works in a strange medium and with entirely new material. In all such familiar instances the resultant "foreignness" and inadequacy of self-expression are patent to trained insight; and the entire work that is thus produced may quite justly be described as external to the real nature of even its own creator—a principle obviously ignored by the cruder types of Pantheism.

So far as art is concerned, indeed, this argument can easily be expanded. For we have already found that any form of mere manufacture, and especially of mechanical manufacture or mass production, is always instinctively

repudiated by the artist as an unworthy betrayal of his highest nature. Yet justifiable though his aversion from all such methods undeniably is, it still remains true that every artist is absolutely dependent on manufacture of one kind or another and is constantly utilizing this, often without recognizing how much he really owes to the expert makers of his indispensable instruments. But a bad fountain-pen or a stretch of poor canvas is quite sufficient to defeat the richest flow of inspiration; so that every artist, in being a member of the social organism from which he can never completely isolate himself, is also indirectly or at secondhand a manufacturer; while whenever the normal source of supply fails he is forced to suspend his purely aesthetic functions and try to make what he requires with his own hands. In all primitive societies, in fact, every artist must largely be his own manufacturer too, just as the pioneers of science actually made their own lenses and other apparatus; and only in the later stages of society does any specialized subdivision of functions invade the realm of art. On the other hand it is plain that even a genius in fine art would acquire a still greater personality if, while retaining his fullest powers, he were to add to these the capacity to produce his material and instruments on a scale of perfection equal to that of his purely aesthetic creations; although it would still remain true that the former would be more external—more foreign—to his proper nature than the latter.

It may be that da Vinci and William Morris were instances of some such rare conjunction of abilities; but there can be no doubt that this issue actually confronts us in the case of Deity and the material universe. For both its mechanical attributes and its aesthetic qualities are, each in its own way, marvellously perfect; so that

not only when regarded as a product of divine art—or, with Douglas Fawcett, of divine imagination—is this universe a creation, but in the light of what has previously been said about the inherently progressive tendencies of manufacture in extent and rapidity, it is equally a creation from the purely mechanical standpoint; this holds true even though the detailed nature of such a creation should remain always incomprehensible. In both respects alike, however, it is a creation whose very character conceals its creator from man's direct observation,¹ and this even though Deity remains immanent throughout its entire extent and activity. Under these conditions, therefore, there must exist the immanence of a personality that is eternally veiled. Falling back then (as here we are compelled to do) upon analogy, we may say that the relation between Deity and the physical universe is comparable to that of a great artist who also produces the most adequate, and at the same time the most exquisite, material wherewith to operate—the purest gold for his metalwork, or even the most beautiful type for the printing of his poems. In both these cases alike we find markedly differing *degrees* of immanence or self-revelation, provided always, of course, that the observing mind is competent to pursue the requisite research. For in the preliminary preparation of his metal or type-founts such an artist would undoubtedly exert his fullest powers; and yet these results could constitute, even at their best, only a partial and extremely indirect expression of his actual personality. In technical terms then, his immanence would here remain an indirect and incomplete immanence; while in his aesthetic products and activities proper, on the other hand, it would plainly become much less indirect. It may be

¹ Cf. *ante* p. 72.

objected that this negative description is too weak. But we have already seen that even the highest forms of art may be, and in fact often are, in many respects extremely imperfect manifestations of creative individuality;¹ and yet, since personality is unceasingly dynamic, it must inevitably find some still more adequate means of self-revelation than either the making of its material or any form of purely artistic experience can ever provide.

3. We may indeed carry our argument much further than this. For is it not always true that, unless the artist himself were immeasurably greater than his work, he could never produce that work? Or in more abstract terms, must not his potentialities always outrange what he actually puts forth, just as the tropic noonday sun transcends ordinary daylight? Nor, apart from the blinding solar brilliance, could daylight itself exist; and similarly that partial revelation—that merely indirect immanence—just referred to, of itself necessarily implies a completer and more direct immanence; while so far as mankind is concerned in this respect, it is of course almost a truism that only his intimate associates, sharing perhaps his uneventful daily life, can know the immortal genius for what he really is.

Now although such genius must always be extremely rare, still we must here recall (as I have previously insisted) that it is genius, and genius alone, when operating in its proper sphere, that can yield any *adequate* criterion of the actual nature and capacity of selfhood. It is, in other words, a radical error to interpret personality always in terms of only the average individual, though the necessities of practical life compel us to do this. Theoretically however this is plainly seriously misleading; for if a savage or a child were to adopt the same stand-

¹ P. 72 *ante*.

point and regard his own primitive level of selfhood as its universal type, we should at once point him to the civilized white and the adult. But it is obvious that genius—of course in its own specific (even if somewhat narrow) sphere—stands in exactly the same relation to the average person as does the adult to the child.

Just as the finest type of mountain scenery and structure, therefore, is to be found not in the Mendips but in the Himalayas, so the fullest capacities of selfhood are expressed not by the ordinary person but by genius. But in adopting this wider and at the same time more accurate point of view, I have just maintained that even the highest genius is (in the first place) "immeasurably greater than his work", and could indeed never produce this unless he were greater; while secondly—simply in virtue of being a dynamic or incessantly active self—he must seek some means of yet fuller self-manifestation than even his art itself provides. I do not mean, however, that this "seeking" is necessarily and always a conscious effort in the sense of being deliberate. It is rather subconscious or "instinctive"—the purely natural expression of the innate tendencies of all highly developed individuality; and only when this natural outflow becomes impeded does the self *deliberately* attempt to find the proper channel for its energies, while at the same time such opposition often rouses its highest but hitherto latent powers.

From all these considerations, then, there arises the extremely difficult and equally important problem of the manner in which selfhood attains its *completest* expression, for which it is always seeking, as distinct from all those partial self-manifestations already discussed. Our difficulties here, once again, are plainly the inevitable result of the high complexity of both the self

and its environment when these are considered, as they demand to be, in their most fully developed forms. For I have throughout insisted that such complexity is (as it were) the hall-mark of personality proper; whence it must follow that, as personality develops, this complexity is continuously intensified, even though it becomes at the same moment welded into a firm unity which presents—like every great work of art—a certain simplicity of its own; a simplicity, again, which is often highly deceptive because it blinds us to the actual intricacy which underlies it. Only careful analysis, therefore, will enable us adequately to envisage the situation; and I shall make this as brief and untechnical as possible.

In the first place, then, we have to consider the self's "completest expression, as distinct from its partial expressions". Now this distinction must never be mistaken for separation. For since completer expression consists always in a greater fullness, it must, while remaining distinct, *include* all the "partial expressions". It includes these, however, not in the sense that 12 includes 7 and 5 so that their specific individuality is lost, but rather in the way in which every great nation includes the long series of its greatest members. For while each of these plainly owes his greatness to the prominence with which he stands out from everyone else, still in virtue of his contribution to his country's greatness, the latter is *identical* with his own even while it is at the same time *distinct* from and far higher than his own. If this seems perplexing or even paradoxical, it is because distinctions are almost always regarded as being spatial or temporal, so that the distinct things or events, whatever they may be, are subconsciously regarded as lying outside one another either in space or in time. It must now be recognized, however, that in all the highest

categories of existence this mutual externality vanishes, and gives place to those far more subtle, yet at the same moment more profound, distinctions which unite what they divide.

In exactly the same way, therefore, that national temperament permeates and moulds all individual genius, so that Plato and Cæsar are also Greece and Rome, even while their countries are far more than they themselves, similarly that completest manifestation of personality for which we are now searching is never separate from, but must rather penetrate and control, all its partial modes of manifestation; and this raises another formidable difficulty. For it is always true that this "completest manifestation" can be fully apprehended neither by others nor by ourselves; and this again is not paradoxical, but is on the contrary only the natural consequence of the inexhaustible complexity of the self. The familiar truths that genius is inarticulate and unconscious, that the greatest men do not know where they are going, that only a narrow mind can clearly perceive its petty goal, are all varying expressions of the single basal principle that *complete* self-expression always transcends self-comprehension. Thus it would seem to follow that we are here attempting an impossible task, since any "complete manifestation of personality" must always defy adequate description; and in one sense this is undeniably true. But although it must always remain impossible to prepare any fully *detailed* account, it is still possible to describe the situation in general terms which outline the relation between such complete self-manifestation and all subordinate and partial forms.

4. It is at this point, unfortunately, that we meet the most serious of all our difficulties—that is the problem of the most suitable term wherewith to denote

this completest manifestation of the self. For the only two alternative words that are available have now acquired so rigid and limited a meaning that their use threatens to defeat my purpose from the very outset; so that to describe the full manifestation of personality as "ethical" or "moral" is to suggest, at the best, a narrow priggishness or even hypocrisy, and at the worst the atmosphere of the divorce court. I can only urge that all these low aspects of the situation be excluded, so that both terms can be given that deep significance which is their proper due and is indeed usual in ethical and philosophic theory; and with this in view, I believe my argument will gain somewhat by employing "moral" as subordinate to "ethical". Much the same difficulties attend "conduct" or "behaviour", simply because we fail to realize that conduct, when taken (as it really should be) in its entirety, is always the outer expression of the self's true inner nature. But when this simple truth is ignored, as unhappily it usually is, it is inevitable that "conduct" should be regarded as a mere group of artificial reactions to unnatural conditions; and yet even this stupid standpoint itself implies that what formal etiquette generally demands is really the best standard that is attainable. So far as legal and medical, or indeed all professional, etiquette is concerned this is of course obvious; but it is, at bottom, exactly the same spirit which animates all social *étiquette* whenever this is maintained as it deserves to be—the spirit, that is to say, of chivalry, nobility and sincerity, difficult though it may often be to recognize these under the debased forms that are so prevalent.

If then we keep before our minds the underlying purpose of the strict etiquette and ritual of great ceremonial occasions, and at the same time enrich its impli-

cations of the essential dignity of all behaviour, we obtain something of what I wish to convey by describing the completest forms of the manifestation of selfhood as essentially "ethical". Stating this in converse terms, I mean that "ethical" ought always to denote—as in philosophic theory it actually does denote—the fullest and most real expression of the nature and potentialities of personality—the noblest attitudes, and consequently the finest deeds, that humanity can ever attain; in short, perhaps, the "excellence" of Aristotle.

Approaching the present problem from this standpoint then, it should be clear that the ethical must necessarily be (as I have already suggested) all-inclusive; as was in fact this Aristotelian "excellence". In this respect again the familiar aspects of etiquette become helpful. For to meet its highest demands continuously is so difficult that we prefer to relax and to some degree ignore them; and yet, as is shown whenever we first meet a stranger, they are always subconsciously felt to rule even the smallest details of behaviour. In principle therefore, and apart from the onerousness of their perpetual observance and their sometimes foolishly exaggerated forms, the rules of etiquette are plainly "all-inclusive"; while at the same time it is their violation, and this often on the most delicate points, that almost invariably yields the surest indication of the true status of the person concerned; but this amply confirms my contention, since it is plainly only an indirect way of saying that the real self becomes in this way most clearly and directly revealed.

I wish to urge then, that this—the highest—interpretation of etiquette be also applied to "ethical" or "moral", so that their too prevalent debasement shall be regarded exactly as sane people regard the parallel misapplications of good social rules. For in both instances

of perversion alike we are dealing, at bottom, with an artificial formality that easily merges into hypocrisy, trivial and amusing in the one case and vitally serious in the other. Let us rigorously exclude, in short, the Chadbands, the Pecksniffs and the Snobs; and then it becomes possible to see (still further) that the familiar antithesis between knowledge and art on the one hand, and a so-called "morality" on the other, gains all its force only from that too restricted sense of "morality" which has already been repudiated. Reverting to Aristotelian terms, *all* "excellence" without any exception is, in its essence, ethical or moral. Not the "excellence" of saint or mystic only, but equally the genius of every immortal artist, like the brilliance of every great thinker, has an ineradicable ethical aspect which is in reality the most fundamental element in the whole situation.

But at the same time it is the very perfection of all such great intellectual and aesthetic achievements which obscures this truth, and thus confirms still further the popular narrow applications of "moral". For these supreme triumphs of the human spirit stand out in such marked isolation from the tedious levels of ordinary life that they seem to share nothing whatever in common with "conduct" in its usual sense—an impression inevitably strengthened by the eccentricity and "immorality" which genius so often exhibits. Thus art, and even knowledge, have inevitably come to be regarded as essentially antithetic to "morals", which in their turn are looked upon as the scanty compensation granted to the undistinguished many with whose commonplace virtues genius may safely dispense; so that to live solely for art is too often supposed to justify the release of the genius from the claims which bind his fellows.

5. But if we only realize that "virtue" literally means

"manliness" we shall easily escape this common confusion between virtue and virtuosity; and while we may be perfectly willing to pay the price of artistic and intellectual genius, we must also insist that it is a price and not a ransom. In other words, not even the most perfect art, if indeed such a disjunction were ever possible, is worth the loss of true manliness; while this equally implies, of course, that "virtue" should be rescued from its pale and effeminate counterfeits and restored to its pristine vigour. But as a matter of fact the "most perfect art" (as I have just maintained) is always inherently ethical in two vital respects. In the first place it reveals some truth—expresses some principle—manifests certain aspects of experience—so profound that not the contemporary mind, but only the spirit of posterity and of the race, can grasp its full meaning and appreciate its real value. And secondly, every outstanding genius keenly feels that his own contribution to the heritage of the race is imperatively demanded from him as something which at any cost he must achieve. It is true that he may never realize all this specifically; he may have no "message" and his work no "moral"; but however inarticulate it may remain, his consciousness of the irresistible urge that inspires him is always most intense; and it is precisely this imperativeness that makes such situations essentially ethical. I am quite content however to describe this as the operation of that distinctively *aesthetic* necessity which compels every true artist rigorously to pursue—and again at all costs—his own highest possible ideals. For undeniably it is an "aesthetic necessity"; but as soon as we carry our analysis a little further we realize that it coercively dominates (first) the artist's entire experience, and (secondly) the reactions of his fellows; and thus we perceive that we are dealing throughout

with an influence which most profoundly modifies conduct, and which must therefore be not simply aesthetic but also, and still more fundamentally, *ethical*; while the proverbial sternness of the dictates of the "artistic conscience" equally indicates its dual character as both aesthetic and moral at one and the same moment.¹

It is in these considerations that we find the real significance of that much abused maxim, "art for art's sake", since its truth depends entirely on the extent to which it is applied; and to restrict it as is usually done is therefore to falsify it. For the more art becomes developed as it imperatively demands to be, the more does it prove itself to be inherently "ethical" in so far as it immeasurably strengthens, and at the same moment ennobles and refines, the manliness or "virtue" of the race. This is most clearly seen, perhaps, in great poetry and architecture; but it is true universally. To separate art from virtue therefore—to declaim "art for art's sake" in any exclusive and isolating sense—is only to debase the one and emasculate the other; and thus it becomes the parrot-cry of the pseudo-genius who seeks to conceal his aesthetic feebleness by a febrile virility which can only impress observers as shallow-minded as himself. Every real genius, on the contrary, is in one way or another essentially manly and therefore "virtuous" in the literal sense, even though some eccentricity may betray his contempt for the more effeminate "virtue" of his fellows; and this attitude is reflected in the familiar contrast between what is vaguely described as "character" as opposed (once again) to "genius". For "character" denotes what are always dimly felt to be the most valuable and permanent elements of personality; while their absence is held to outweigh, in the long run, all

¹ Cf. further below p. 165.

that may be gained in artistic and intellectual eminence alone. And this brings us once more to the essential complexity of personality as such; for all these deceptive antitheses spring from the almost insuperable difficulty of producing a personality that is equally well developed in all its possible aspects. It follows therefore that practically all "excellence" must be partial or one-sided, and compensated by that serious deficiency elsewhere which is "the price of genius". This is plainly true of even "moral excellence" in its usual narrower sense, allied as this almost universally is with a pseudo-puritanic contempt for knowledge and beauty which great puritans like Milton and Wordsworth never express. Nevertheless it is always "character"—that is, the keen ethical sense and moral nature of the individual—which is indelibly stamped upon all the really greatest products of art and so renders them immortal; and since such genius constitutes the highest level of human selfhood, it is quite legitimate to hold that the fullest revelation of selfhood must assume a form which is essentially, though perhaps not superficially, ethical.

In conclusion then, there are in the case of every individual markedly distinct degrees of self-revelation, all differing widely in their directness and fullness; and these differences, still further, become steadily intensified as selfhood progressively evolves. The principal modes or types of such revelation of personality are three: the mechanical, the aesthetic and (in the foregoing sense) the ethical. The first concerns the mechanisms and manufactures that are finally produced in all their widening range of varied intricacy and automatism; the second type is allied with the equally far-reaching range of perfection in works of art; and both alike present striking contrasts in the extent to which they

reveal the originating personality. Whenever this is itself of a markedly primitive order, as *e.g.* in children and savages, art and manufacture are always indistinguishably merged with each other; while to an observing mind of some higher type they disclose with comparative completeness and immediacy the self which has produced them—its restricted intellectual powers together with its crude emotions and petty motives. But as selfhood continues further to evolve, the situation radically alters in such a way that as soon as its mechanism has become automatic to a marked degree this begins to conceal, and no longer directly to reveal, its own originator; and exactly the same principle is true, in its own specific way, of even art and its creators. Thus we begin with the direct and comparatively complete revelation of personality; but this, on the other hand, is under these conditions of a relatively very low order; and from this primary stage we pass on, by insensible degrees, to the highly indirect and impartial revelation, or it may be indeed the actual self-concealment, of all personality which is of a relatively high order, as *e.g.* in the case of a genius who fully reveals himself only to some beloved child or friend but never, through his works themselves, to the world at large.¹ It is then this final mode of self-revelation which, as contrasted with its two allied types (the mechanical and the aesthetic), must without any injustice be called “ethical”. For it is plain that only thus is the “character” or real nature of the individual directly manifested—his ambitions and underlying motives, his secret hopes and fears, his total reaction, in short, to his entire environment—the intent, as distinguished from the content, of all his work, apart from which it can never be properly interpreted, provided however, that this

¹ P. 71 *ante*.

"reaction" is realized to be never merely passive but always intensely dynamic. The inexpressible subtlety of such intimate self-revelation, again, is simply the inevitable consequence of its combined delicacy and complexity, which must raise it far above the understanding of others in precisely the same way that adult experience almost absolutely outranges the insight of the child. And yet even the greatest of mankind craves for some opportunity, no matter how inadequate it may be, for such full and direct self-manifestation. He must find some one, however unworthy, to whom he can reveal what makes him most himself; so that not to seek this—to remain entirely aloof from all mankind—is rightly judged to be inhuman. And once again we must give this familiar word its full implication; for to be "inhuman" means, literally, to be not a self—not a person—means (in other words) to defy the natural demands which selfhood, as essentially such, must address to itself; it is to obstruct its most powerful tendencies and, in the end, defeat its highest purposes.

All this is true of every self without exception, no matter how simple and ordinary it may be;¹ but it is distinctly and superlatively true of the highest possible types of personality. It is always the noblest who most deeply love their world and their fellows and, in so loving, most fully and directly reveal themselves; the two characteristics are naturally connected together. But to say that anything is natural implies, in one sense, that it is imperative or necessary. The free fall of a stone e.g. is "natural"; but this only means, at bottom, that it is invariable, and therefore necessary or imperative in the

¹ Provided of course there is no mental abnormality; but this defect means that personality is itself in some degree lacking, so that any exceptions are only apparent and not real; cf. Bradley, *Ethical Studies* (new ed.), p. 7, note.

sense that its non-occurrence would be incomprehensible or even miraculous; and this holds equally of all "natural" processes and changes, alike in the spheres of matter, of life and of mind.¹ With reference to our own subject, then, it follows that the same full and direct revelation of personality, which we have just seen to occur in all its most primitive types, becomes yet more imperative—or more "natural"—in the case of all its most highly developed forms. The same conclusion must therefore be true with regard to the Supreme Self or Deity. Here likewise, and inseparable from His indirect and partial self-revelations in the structure and beauty of the world, there must exist a more complete and immediate revelation which is most adequately described as "ethical" or "moral"; and its more detailed conditions will be considered in the next chapter.

¹ This remains true, as regards the more technical aspects of the subject, even if we take into account some modern views of causation, *etc.*; for there always exists, at least, a logical necessity or "naturalness" which cannot be evaded.

THE ETHICAL CHARACTER OF REALITY

1. IN considering the distinctively ethical self-revelation of Deity it must be realized, from the outset, that the entire problem is once again a matter of the available evidence at our disposal. In other words, the *philosophic* approach to the subject must be carefully distinguished from the religious—or alternatively the mystical—approach. With these also, no doubt, the issue is in the end one of evidence. But the specific evidence to which all forms of religious experience appeal is—and in fact must be—always relevant to that experience. It largely consists therefore in the deliverances of man's *subjective* experience—the dictates of conscience, the mystic vision, the response to prayer, the direct commands of God, with the innumerable subordinate types of these phenomena. Now without in the slightest degree deprecating the value of this mass of evidence, it should be clear that none of it can provide first-hand *philosophic* evidence with regard to the present issue. On the contrary, many systems of religion *pre-suppose* the truth that Deity is moral or holy, in the sense that they accept this principle as their very foundation; while on the other hand it is one of the main tasks of philosophy to evaluate this principle, to survey and analyse the correlated phenomena, and to attempt some final estimate of their self-consistency and real significance; never, of course, in any necessarily hostile spirit. For so far as its immediate content is concerned, it is plain that the extremely diverse types assumed by religious experience present serious discrepancies or even contradictions which must somehow be either harmonized or removed; although this need detract in no measure from the

finality which individuals or groups must always find their own relevant experience to possess. In this respect, therefore, it is amply sufficient to accept Bradley's explicit standpoint as to the supreme value of religion, *as religion*: "there is nothing more real than what comes in religion. The man, who demands a reality more solid than that of the religious consciousness, seeks he does not know what. Religion is something more, and therefore something higher, than philosophy."¹

But to this it must immediately be added that its characteristic subjectivity, its inalienable emotional aspects, and its consequent transcendence of any specifically logical form, render the content of religious experience—again *as religious*—unsuitable as first-hand material for philosophic argument. It must also, as far as this is possible, be made the object of contemplative thought, or become coherently rationalized; and this remains true even if it is contended that the real essence of all religion is non-rational, transcendent or "numinous". For this can only limit the applicability of philosophic method; it cannot exclude it altogether.

Discarding therefore (for the reasons just outlined) any distinctively religious standpoint, I shall maintain, to begin with, that in exactly the same way that our survey of the Universe discloses (a) its automatic mechanism, (b) its dynamic energy, (c) its evolutionary tendency and (d) the implications of its aesthetic attributes, so this survey is capable of revealing the indelibly *ethical* aspect of the universal process. In this respect, unfortunately, we encounter afresh that far too restricted interpretation of the term "ethical" which has just been criticized in the preceding chapter. Once again therefore its implica-

¹ *Appearance and Reality*, pp. 449, 453; cf. also *Ethical Studies*, "Concluding Remarks", and Hegel's *Logic* (Wallace), p. xxvi.

tions must be both expanded and deepened, and this of course without being substantially altered, much less eviscerated. Such an expansion obviously becomes possible only by first of all retaining the essential meaning of "ethical" in all its applications, and then seeking its profounder significance. This further enquiry, in the end, must plainly resolve itself into the analysis of the concepts of "good" and "evil", of "right" and "wrong"; not however with reference to the details of conduct (important though these always are) but rather to the *ultimate* sanction of every moral ideal and every ethical demand. Is there any absolute standard of goodness?—any reality akin to Plato's supreme "Idea of the Good"? What justifies the imperativeness of Duty?—the insuppressible "must" that is implied in every "ought"? If it is argued that no such absolute standard exists,¹ then this negative conclusion plainly applies equally to aesthetics and to knowledge; so that both the canons of art and the laws of thought rest on exactly the same basis as every code of morals, all alike being never more than conventional. But when on the other hand we consider the persistent and evolutionary trend of phenomena—the ultimate elimination of the "unfit", not only in the world of life, but equally in the sphere of mind and conduct—then it becomes possible to discern that "indelibly ethical aspect" of Reality to which I have already referred.

Once again, however, the narrow usage to which "ethical" is generally condemned makes it extremely difficult to perceive anything beyond its apparently artificial connotations—those incessantly changing moral standards and ideals which provide the stock-in-trade of popular discussion. Here however it is usually forgotten

¹ But on this suggestion *cf.* p. 13 *ante*.

that these changes, in the long run, are always far more than mere change; for the entire process constitutes an ever fuller *development* as one salient instance of that universal advance in the level of existence just insisted upon. Not only is the history of the human race abundant evidence of this, despite the obvious fluctuations that are so frequently over-emphasized, but even the demands of formal etiquette, as I have previously argued, afford weighty support to the same conclusion as soon as they are properly interpreted.¹ Yet in spite of all this, the general conviction that ethical codes are purely conventional is so firmly rooted that the subject is best approached from what will probably appear to be a very remote starting-point—that is from the consideration not of conduct itself but of reason, thought and knowledge.

2. Now despite the patent contrasts between these two spheres, one extremely significant link of interconnection at once becomes obvious in what is usually called the “abstract” character of all pure thought, which—like similarly “abstract” ethical principles—is supposed to deal not with actualities but with wholly theoretical, and therefore with mainly artificial, problems. There is of course much that fully justifies this popular belief; the absolutely rigid or elastic solid, the perfect fluid or vacuum of physical theory, are undeniably all purely conceptual—like points, straight lines and hyperspaces together with many other imaginary mathematical entities. Hence, as Hume explicitly argued long ago, the truths of mathematics and its allied sciences, like the “laws of thought” and logical principles in general, are widely held to be valid only within that remote and purely subjective realm which is regarded as originating

¹ Cf. *ante* p. 88.

within man's own mind as his reasoning capacity slowly develops. Thus mathematical and logical self-consistency becomes undeniably absolute, but at the same moment quite unreal; just as an ideally governed country might conceivably exist, but only in some distant region wholly cut off from ordinary mundane affairs.

Now as I have already observed, there is a large element of truth in this description of the situation; but it need only be adopted as it stands, and then expanded a little further, for its final inadequacy to become quite clear. In the first place then, it must plainly follow that if this extensive and constantly expanding system of supposedly "abstract" truths is to maintain its absoluteness unimpaired, every mathematical and logical principle—indeed every rational conclusion without exception, no matter what its specific type may be—must agree with all other principles. For any single error or contradiction, however trivial, would necessarily vitiate the system's absoluteness, just as one single crime would be sufficient to destroy the social and moral perfection of the hypothetical ideal state. In logic and mathematics themselves, of course, this severe test is always rigidly applied; one false step suffices to invalidate an entire demonstration, so that everywhere the strength of the intellectual chain is that of its smallest and weakest link. This is equally the case with all scientific theories and legal arguments, so far as these claim to be strictly logical; while a confessedly illogical argument, of any kind, obviously has no value except under some highly exceptional circumstances which compel its acceptance in default of anything better. But since these "abstract" legal arguments are often concerned with practical affairs of the first importance it is plain that, without in any degree abandoning the original absolute standard of truth, they have passed

out of the realm of the purely abstract, formal and remote into the world of actual experience. Similarly, though perhaps not so clearly, with many scientific theories, particularly those concerned with engineering, invention and medicine.

The fact is of course that no theory and no truth can ever be of a purely and exclusively formal character, though they must so appear to those ignorant of their origin and full significance. All intellectual or rational truth, on the contrary, has a dual aspect; it lives within two worlds at the same moment—the world of pure or “abstract” thought and the world of actual experience;¹ while the more precise its abstract form becomes, the more efficient and valuable are its applications, as is evident once again in invention and law. Thus wills are often invalidated because they fail to conform to “abstract” legal principles, just as criminals frequently escape justice owing to some formal irregularity in the indictment.² All this, curiously enough, may be most clearly seen if we consider two of the most abstruse and abstract of modern mathematical theories, profoundly difficult as these plainly are—the Theory of Relativity and the Quantum Theory. In both alike we find extreme formality and abstraction, and above all (so far as they have yet been developed) absolute logical self-consistency.³ If then the popular view of “abstract truth” is correct, these two theories should be the most remote of all from

¹ More strictly, “pure thought” is itself a form, or type, or phase, of “actual experience”. But the common distinction between them is so deeply rooted that it cannot here be avoided.

² Similarly, judgments are often reserved in order that some “formal” legal issue may be investigated, whose “practical” consequences are of the most far-reaching order.

³ “The Theory of Relativity, although born of experiment, can be argued as a matter of logical necessity” (Andrade, *The Structure of the Atom*, p. 703).

the real universe; but as a matter of fact the precise contrary is the case. For they bear throughout most closely on the actual processes and structure of the entire physical universe; so that in all such theories as these it is plain that abstract thought and real existence¹ are most intimately connected. It must of course be added that neither theory is quite complete and final, since neither as yet adequately explains all the phenomena within its province. But even this negative feature gains profound significance in the present connection; for the two theories can be rendered more logical than they are at present only by bringing their formal and abstract expression into still more precise conformity with Nature's actual processes.²

But since the Relativity Theory and the Quantum Theory are two of the most far-reaching, intricate and exact³ of all modern theories, it plainly follows that what is true of them must be yet truer of less abstract and more restricted theories. These, likewise, are fully and finally valid only when, and only because, they express some aspects of the actual constitution of Reality. It is therefore this "actual constitution of Reality" that forms the *ultimate* basis and sanction of their truth; and this in fact is always the case, with no exceptions whatever. However "abstract" it may appear to be on the surface, all logic is in the end founded on the "constitution of Reality"; and so far as this foundation becomes

¹ Another common, but unjustified, distinction, since thought is itself one factor within real existence; *cf.* note, p. 101.

² "There must be a radical change in the fundamental conceptions on which our scheme of physics is founded; the problem is to discover the particular change required" (Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*, p. 182).

³ The value of the physical constant h is expressed by 26 ciphers following the decimal point.

impaired logic to that degree loses its validity—it ceases (in other words) to be logic at all. Thus we perceive that it is the Universe itself which yields the final guarantee or the ultimate sanction of all knowledge—whether “abstract” or “practical”, “formal” or “material”—whatever specific form it may assume. “The harmony of logic” (as Professor Whitehead expresses this) “lies upon the universe as an iron necessity”;¹ and this conclusion should now enable us to see still further that it is the Universe, or again “the constitution of Reality”, that similarly forms the sole *ultimate* sanction of ethical principles.

3. For as I have already suggested at the beginning of the previous section, the expression of every ethical principle, *as* a principle, must always be given a form that is as logical as possible under the circumstances. This is one of the most difficult tasks undertaken by the moral theorist, although the circumstances themselves, of course, too frequently prevent him attaining any marked success. Thus man’s limited experience and knowledge combine with the baffling complexity of the entire situation to restrict his ethical maxims to that narrow pragmatic form and “practical” level best suited to ordinary conduct; and any departure from these conditions almost inevitably involves abstractness or, still worse, self-contradiction. But this no more implies that ethics is essentially illogical than the confused notions of early science implied that science, as such, is illogical. Quite obviously the contrary is true; which means that current ethics—again owing to the extreme intricacy of the phenomena with which it always has to deal—still remains on the same painfully low level as

¹ *Science and the Modern World*, p. 24. This has of course always been a fundamental principle of Hegelianism.

that occupied by ancient and medieval scientific speculations; so that just as modern science has risen far above these crude stages, the theoretical ethics of the future may more closely rival the abstract sciences of to-day. Spinoza, as is well known, almost took this for granted when he formulated his system *in more geometrico*; and in so far as formal ethics gradually becomes increasingly logical it must plainly possess the same foundation as does pure logic itself—once again, that is, the nature of Reality; in this respect the current tendency towards a “scientific ethics” is highly significant.

This must not be taken to mean, however, that what I may now call the “logic of morals” must assume the same detailed methods and type of expression as the logic of science. On the contrary, the “logic of morals” is quite consistent with the most striking of paradoxes and most brilliant of epigrams, in this respect closely resembling aesthetics as the formal logic of great art. In these realms the penetrating intuitions of genius will always be far more revealing than the pedestrian results of ordinary thought, simply because the former possess a supreme yet baffling logic of their own which can always be keenly felt rather than explicitly understood.¹ But all this means only that every genius enjoys a direct insight into “the nature of Reality”, of course in his peculiar realm, far outranging the purblind vision of commonplace mortals; so that it is we, rather than such great spirits, who are actually illogical; and to accuse them of obscurity, or even of paradox, is the profound wisdom of the owl which calls the sunshine dark because it cannot see.

“Morality” then, as Butler long ago insisted, “is the nature of things”; or in more technical terms, it is the

¹ Mr. Ernest Newman has somewhere referred to Wagner’s “desire for flawless logic in music”.

Universe that constitutes the single ultimate basis alike of logic and of ethics. Two further features of the situation should make this principle equally clear—(first) that characteristic imperativeness which duty shares with truth, and (secondly) the rigorous conditions which rule the development alike of knowledge and of personality. Both truth and duty, in other words, are *necessary*, in the sense that both must be unquestionably accepted as soon as they become clearly recognized for what they actually are. This necessity seems at first sight to conflict with the inalienable freedom of selfhood; but the contradiction is only apparent. For it is obvious that while everyone, if he chooses, is free to reject any established truth, he can do so only at the cost of committing himself to serious ignorance or error and therefore, if he persists in this, to a complete intellectual self-stultification which will inevitably destroy his very freedom itself. Only a fool or a madman, then, would rebel against the *necessity* of the multiplication table in common affairs, of the calculus in current scientific research, and—quite possibly—of the Quantum Theory in the physics of the future. In every instance alike, simple or complex, practical or abstract, man can retain his inherent freedom of action only by first submitting his mind to the rigorous demands of logic—by accepting every truth as *necessarily* and *imperatively* true. He is like a ship in harbour whose movements are restricted in every direction except one—that is towards the open sea, and this only with an accurately regulated compass. Here, as always, man controls Nature only by implicitly obeying her. But Nature, just as logic has been found to be, is simply one aspect of the Universe; and the imperativeness which both possess is nothing more or less, at bottom, than the manifestation (in Butler's words) of the "nature of

things" or, to adopt a striking modern version, of Whitehead's "iron necessity" already referred to; and in complete accordance with this is the same author's employment of the unpopular term "dogma"—"a dogma is the precise enunciation of a general truth, divested so far as possible from particular exemplification. Such precise expression is in the long run a condition for vivid realization, for effectiveness, for apprehension of width of scope, and for survival."¹

Exactly so is it with the imperativeness of duty, except for the important difference that the necessity of duty is always more keenly felt than clearly understood. In other words, it is a matter far more of the emotions than of the intellect; but this is only because emotion is much more deeply rooted in human experience than is pure knowledge, since many of our emotions are a bequest from our animal ancestry, while our intellectual equipment is of much more recent growth and therefore much less systematically organized. That is why moral imperativeness is so frequently questioned and described as being nothing more than the pressure of convention or the persistence of custom. Its ancient sources in personal or divine authority have so frequently proved to be fallible, its social and legal sanctions so transient, and its philosophic justification so abstract and obscure, that in proportion as man's knowledge of the fixed order of Nature has increased, the unceasing variability and mutual conflict of moral dictates have inevitably been taken to indicate the lack of any permanent foundation. This impression is further deepened by the comparative ease with which many duties, and these frequently the most important, may be evaded or even defied with apparent impunity; on the other hand any neglect of

¹ *Religion in the Making*, pp. 111, 112.

intellectual principles is very quickly penalized, while duties thus ignored often prove not to be actual duties at all but only artificial regulations, or else the natural consequences are so long deferred that their underlying connection with the original action cannot be discerned.

All these contrasts between knowledge and conduct—between truth and duty—however, arise only when human life has attained a fairly high level; for both savages and children consistently overlook even quite simple scientific truths until these are revealed by painful experience. But the actual conditions which clearly operate at such primitive stages continue to operate universally, only (once again) the incessantly advancing complexity of social structure permits the results of purely intellectual errors to be readily discovered, simply because these are usually of a far more elementary order than the intricate, and therefore obscure, consequences of moral wrong-doing. In both instances alike, nevertheless, the causal sequence remains absolutely intact;¹ and to imagine that it can be suspended in the ethical sphere is plainly to revert to that savage mentality which believes that natural ills can be averted by magic spells. This however leads to the second feature which demands consideration—"the conditions which rule the *development* both of knowledge and of personality".

4. These conditions have indeed already been outlined in the foregoing description of man's primitive experience, since (as I have just insisted) they "continue to operate universally". This is in fact no more than a restatement of the principle that "the Universe constitutes the single ultimate basis alike of logic and of ethics"—of truth and

¹ Cf. "Determinism and Moral Experience", *International Journal of Ethics*, vol. xxxvii, p. 419; "Causal Determination; Its Nature and Types", *Journal of Philosophical Studies*, vol. v, p. 545.

of goodness—of “right” equally in its intellectual and its ethical significance. Again the contrast between these two spheres arises from the comparative simplicity of the realm of pure knowledge as against the far higher intricacy of moral experience. This does not mean, of course, that “pure knowledge” is ever actually “simple” in any absolute sense, but only that no matter how labyrinthine science may become, it can never rival the still profounder complexity of either the aesthetic or the moral sphere; always provided, *bien entendu*, that the latter are not deprived of their legitimate content, as too often happens in philosophic discussion. This relative simplicity, then, enables abstract thought to acquire that self-sufficiency and independence that are so characteristic of its activities—enables the abstract thinker, in other words, to discover so many truths and principles deductively or *a priori*, and apparently therefore without being compelled to base these upon, nor to test them by, any appeal to “experience” and “facts” in the usual sense of the words. As I have repeatedly observed already, all this is patent in logic, mathematics, and the mathematical aspects of the physical, or even the biological, sciences. But the other aspect of the situation, too frequently ignored, has equally been emphasized—that is that not even the most “abstract” of all logico-mathematical theories are ever actually independent of real existence. On the contrary, as has been found in Quantum and Relativity Theory, the ultimate criterion always remains one and the same—their correspondence or coherence with real events and processes, whether these are the motions of stars or of electrons. This becomes still more obvious in all the less abstract departments of science, where theories must be systematically tested and established by incessant recourse to experiments—in

other words, by widely varied appeals, not now to "abstract" or *a priori* thought, but to Nature herself. But all such appeals, all this testing and establishing, serve not only to consolidate previously acquired knowledge but equally to control—and to control very drastically—its whole further expansion. If then knowledge is regarded in its entirety, it should be clear that its development can proceed only by maintaining the closest concordance with the constitution of Reality, or again to use Butler's phrase, with "the nature of things"; and every departure from this principle entails those severe penalties of ignorance, delusion and error with which primitive man is always painfully familiar.¹

But as soon as wider knowledge enables men to control Nature—to make her no longer an enemy but a willing slave—while at the same time knowledge itself acquires its apparent independence of experience and of real existence, all this tends to be forgotten. Science is then supposed to pursue its self-chosen and remote path, and to be quite content if only its conclusions preserve an artificial harmony among themselves. In this way the innumerable links which so closely bind elementary knowledge to Reality are gradually lost sight of, so that knowledge itself appears to recede further and further into its own peculiar realm of pure abstraction. And when we turn from the intellectual to the moral sphere, once again the intimate connection between all human experience and "the nature of things" becomes obscured by a number of cooperating conditions: by the vastness of the time scale, in which centuries are seasons, on which

¹ Not primitive man alone, however: "our ignorance stands revealed before us, appalling and insistent" (Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*, p. 179). Similarly, the physical "problem of three bodies", despite its apparent simplicity, has not yet been solved.

these conditions themselves operate—by the resultant difficulty, frequently indeed the utter impossibility, of relating moral causes to their effects—by that familiar variability and intricacy of the phenomena which have led man to regard all moral codes as merely transient and conventional—and finally by the marked paucity of universally accepted ethical principles, as contrasted with the steadily increasing number of necessary scientific truths, which compels the dogmatic appeal to “authority”.

It is therefore not until man learns to interpret aright the age-long history of the race that he can perceive that the entire development of his moral experience proceeds on exactly the same lines as the evolution of his intellectual capacities. Both types of progress, in the end, are conditioned in precisely the same way; error in thought, at bottom, is thus one with error in conduct; and the purely logical meaning of “right” and “wrong” is connected with their legal and moral meanings by far more than a mere caprice of language. For in the light of what has just been said as to the inseparability of knowledge from Reality, it should be clear that every intellectual error is an infraction, not merely of some abstract “laws of thought”, but still more of that rational order of the Universe which sustains all these laws; principles that are true or right conform to this order; those that are false contradict it. In exactly the same manner, only (to repeat) on a far wider and more complex scale, all moral evil is an infraction or even (since the will is now involved) a deliberate defiance of “the nature of things”; while just as continued intellectual error rapidly leads to self-stultification, so all persistent moral evil incurs, in the long run, the penalty of the wrongdoers’ elimination. The situation may,

if we choose, be quite accurately expressed in terms of survival, of fitness and of responsive adaptation to the environment. It is true that these concepts are all biological; but it is only necessary to perceive that man's intellectual and moral experience themselves constitute the highest forms of life to realize that "biological" must be given a much wider application than to animal species and physiological processes. So far as man is concerned therefore, "adaptation to the environment" consists in his conformity first to the rational order of Reality, but secondly and still more fundamentally, to the *ethical* constitution of Reality; his complete "environment", in short, is the Universe.¹ If then racial "fitness" is to be permanent, it must combine bodily not only with mental but equally with moral adequacy of response; and while each of these is in its own way indispensable, the course of history plainly shows that national survival demands primarily a rigorous, though at the same time an extremely varied and plastic, observance of the moral order of the Universe, which here operates just as ruthlessly (though perhaps far more slowly) as in the elimination of extinct species of plants and animals.

5. When thus interpreted therefore, man's progressive adaptation to his environment is perceived to constitute his intellectual and moral development as this is conditioned throughout by the Universe. It may at first sight seem an exaggeration to say that the entire content of thought and knowledge is actually *forced* upon the human mind, in and through its ever widening contact with Reality; and yet this is no more than the literal significance of the familiar necessity of all rational thinking; only the expansion of truth proceeds so gradually and (on the whole) so smoothly that this ever present necessity is

¹ Cf. note 2, p. 124 below.

seldom clearly realized.¹ In any case, we are fully justified in holding that knowledge (to say the least) *reflects* the rational order of Reality; and in precisely the same way does man's continuous moral development reflect the *ethical* order of Reality. Here, however, the ever present element of compulsion manifests itself unmistakably in the pain and suffering which all evil brings in its train, and conversely in the rigorous conditions which always attend permanent happiness. If we further recognize that the attainment and enjoyment of all the highest forms of beauty are sternly conditioned in exactly the same manner by aesthetic necessity, again we find that it is at bottom one and the same necessity that is operating throughout, alike in the spheres of knowledge, of art and of conduct.

The only objection, then, that can still be advanced against this conclusion is that it is altogether too wide—that no description of the character of man's limited experience can be employed as any criterion of the nature of Reality; or in other words, that the modern mind must refuse to accept the ancient estimate of man as "the measure of all things". This has of course always been a forcible argument, especially since the Copernican revolution assigned its rightful place to our planet. But this "revolution", significant though it undeniably is, plainly gains much of its impressiveness from the spatio-temporal concepts upon which it rests, and which reduce not only man, but the entire solar system, to a very lowly place in the scheme of things. This raises, however, the still more fundamental question whether the space-time criterion is the proper criterion wherewith

¹ It finds expression, however, in the common phrases "powerful" or "weighty argument"; cf. *ante* p. 103, note. Scientists are sometimes brought to realize that theories, at first sight unfamiliar and revolutionary, *must* be accepted and incorporated.

to attempt to evaluate the spiritual qualities of knowledge and art. If it is, then many a setting is more precious than the jewel, just as the picture gallery and museum must rank above the treasures which they contain. Stated thus baldly, such suggestions are plainly ridiculous; while in actual practice time and space rarely enter into value judgments at all. Even in architecture it is never space, as such, that forms the main determinant; while the high value of permanence always springs from something quite different from the mere time involved. This powerful instinctive repudiation of space-time standards, throughout the realm of art or value, subconscious though it is, is nevertheless in complete accordance with the evolutionary point of view which regards the spatio-temporal continuum as being the framework within which the development of the universe proceeds; to revert to my illustration, space-time is the bare outline of the casket which holds the jewels—the basis on which rests the richer superstructure of life and mind; indispensable as the foundation, but not therefore of supreme value.¹

But it will always be extremely difficult to resist the overwhelming impression produced by the immensities of time and space; and the resultant sense of the drastic limitations of humanity must be counterbalanced by the clearer recognition of the dominance over its material environment which mind progressively acquires as it attains the level of personality. For a full discussion of this subject I must refer to *Personality and Reality*;²

¹ Cf. Professor Alexander's *Space, Time and Deity*.

² Chaps. v, vi; "The Self as a Dominant Real"; "The Advancing Dominance of Selfhood". I am pleased to find my own standpoint so clearly expressed in Professor Julian Huxley's recent Lecture, included in *The Mind*: "The truth is that the evolution of life may be considered as pre-eminently an improvement of the status of mind in the universe . . . wielding the rest of life as its tool

here it will be sufficient to reflect that man's reasoning power has enabled him to penetrate in one direction to the outermost confines of the material universe, in the other to the inmost structure of the atom.¹ This is plainly only one instance of the general principle, already insisted upon, that "knowledge reflects the rational order of Reality" and is throughout conditioned by that order; to which must be added the confirmatory fact that the physics and chemistry of to-day will be far outranged by the discoveries of the future. Similarly the beauty of art is essentially one with the beauty of Nature. In these two essential aspects, therefore, the human mind plainly shows itself to be adequate to the entire universe, first in its physical constitution and secondly so far as its aesthetic qualities are concerned; while in the latter respect, once again, the space and time attributes, purely as such, lose almost all their significance.

But since all the highest levels of artistic experience are fundamentally *spiritual*, and are at the same time inseparably linked not with merely trivial and limited sections of Reality, but rather with the Universe in its entirety, it must plainly follow that moral experience, being likewise spiritual, may be connected with Reality in precisely the same manner. What is true of art is of course equally true of knowledge, as knowledge. But knowledge is usually so closely identified with the physical sciences, which again are mainly concerned with matter and force, with energy and bodily functions, that this material *content* of knowledge too often obscures its properly spiritual character. In fact however, knowledge, . . . subordinating more and more of the other activities of reality to the power of the mind"; pp. 49, 50. The contrast here with the nineteenth-century estimate of Mind is patent and illuminating.

¹ Cf. Armstrong, p. 38 *ante*.

art and moral experience all stand on precisely the same footing and rest on the same basis; and when standards of value are taken into account, as in the end they always must be, it is clear that moral attributes far outweigh artistic and intellectual powers if these are considered alone; of course they never should be considered alone—as severed, that is to say, from experience in its entirety; for whenever this separation does take place there immediately sets in a serious, and ultimately fatal, process of degeneration. But whenever the conflict is forced upon mankind, on any wide scale, between healthy morals on the one hand and great art and pure knowledge on the other—whenever individuals or nations are compelled to choose between these—then, as the entire course of history plainly shows, persistence and continuous development imperatively demand that morality must rank first; although to exclude its natural allies completely is always to risk a painful and repellent narrowness.

“Persistence and continuous development”, however, once more lead us back to the evolutionary point of view, so that only from this standpoint, in the end, can our present problem be properly envisaged. If then (as I have insisted throughout this chapter) all spiritual development, alike as intellectual, as aesthetic and as moral, is most rigorously conditioned by “the nature of things”—in other words by the real Universe—while at the same time it is the moral attributes that always remain the paramount determinants of progress, we cannot but conclude that the Universe possesses an indelibly *ethical* aspect or constitution, precisely as it presents inherently rational and aesthetic aspects. I fully recognize how difficult it is, with our ingrained and painfully narrow moral ideas, to accept this comprehensive principle; but if it is to be rejected, it must obviously be

rejected not partially but completely, so that the basis both of knowledge and of art must share the resultant artificial conventionality which thus becomes assigned to ethics.

Equally difficult is it to appreciate how "rigorously conditioned" the whole course of terrestrial evolution actually is. Too frequently this is supposed to be mainly accidental or contingent; but Professor L. T. Henderson has conclusively shown, I think, that the properties of the chemical elements and compounds, the structure of our planet and the age-long series of changes that it has undergone, are all most delicately adjusted to one another in such a way as to subserve the origination and persistence of living organisms. The subject is too highly technical for discussion here, so that for its complex details I must refer to this author's two able volumes, *The Fitness of the Environment* and *The Order of Nature*. Life, of course, is possible only while organic structure and function can adapt themselves to the environment. But it is equally obvious that not every possible type of physico-chemical environment permits life to arise and to evolve; and it is, in my own opinion, no exaggeration to say that a completer knowledge of all the diverse facts of the type cited by Professor Henderson would enable the appearance of life to be predicted long in advance, and in exactly the same way that eclipses are now predicted. Now what is true of bodily life in its entirety is similarly true of the highest forms of mental and spiritual experience. Equally delicate are the structures, and equally precise the adjustments, of the cerebral organs which are inseparably associated with thought, emotion and will—in a word with all the complex attributes of selfhood,¹ and these again depend

¹ Cf. *ante*, p. 64, note 2.

most intimately on the healthy functioning of the whole bodily organism; while if we once again yield to the temptation to appeal to space-time standards, then we must also judge the diamond to be far inferior in value to the extensive blue clay deposit in which it lay.

6. These considerations therefore, in my opinion, necessitate the clear recognition of "the indelibly ethical aspect of the universal process";¹ and this again impels us forward to the further principle that, just as the equally indelible rational order of the Universe constitutes one form of the self-revelation of Deity, and the perfect automatism of the physical realm still another form, so the ethical aspect of Reality is, at bottom, a third form of the same revelation. But as I have repeatedly maintained, the mechanical automatism of the physical world is necessarily an extremely *indirect* revelation of Deity—so indirect, indeed, that it must conceal Him from all immediate observation. Even in the sphere of art, it has also been found, the complete personality of the artist himself often remains concealed by the very products of his genius, so that any estimate based on these alone may be seriously misleading. This defectiveness of the aesthetic revelation, still further, can be removed only by discerning the dominant *moral* qualities of the artist—the actual motives which underlay his activities, the ideals he pursued, his entire spiritual orientation, in fact, to life and to Reality. It is these, and these alone, which can reveal the complete and true self, although they must never of course be dissociated from what he has created. They obviously constitute therefore at once a fuller, a more direct, and finally a more intimate self-revelation than can be ever given by the products of either the aesthetic or the inventive faculties, since they

¹ *Ante*, p. 97.

can become known only to the inner circle of close friends and associates. Similarly, then, must the ethical character of Reality yield a fuller, more direct, or even more intimate, revelation of Deity than can be given in the rational order and perfect automatism of the world. For the latter are foundational or instrumental to the former, apart from which, in spite of their own absolute perfection, they remain purposeless and valueless; just as the delicate structure and the beautiful design of his instrument remain always subordinate to the music which the genius produces, while this (once again) must in the long run be correlated to his moral nature—to his inner purposes, his secret ambitions and his highest ideals.

Unfortunately, however, the sphere of the ethical good is too often regarded as having merely a passive or contemplative character. Mankind is always far too much inclined to place its heroes certainly upon pedestals, but only as stiff and inanimate statues, or, crowned with haloes, in stained-glass windows. So far as it goes, of course, this is most commendable; but it tends to blind us to the truth that the ethical order of the Universe is never a merely static condition of Being, like the beauty of a picture or a landscape, but is on the contrary an essentially dynamic quality which operates, in the long run, as irresistibly as gravitation and as ruthlessly as natural selection; so that to resist either is, in the end, absolutely fatal. All this has already been repeatedly insisted upon; but it cannot be too emphatically repeated that the final goal of the evolutionary process is the production, not merely of consciousness and not merely of rationality, but always of selfhood as inherently *moral*. This is true even from the purely biological standpoint; as Professor Huxley has expressed it, man, and

man alone, possesses "the power of permanently-continued growth, not of the body, but of the mind . . . possible to the moral and spiritual faculties . . . one of the highest attributes of personality";¹ and so the modern biologist explicitly proclaims with the ethicist that "morality is the nature of things". Survival, on any wide and permanent scale, is possible only to those personalities—to those individuals and communities—which incorporate the qualities of heroism, nobility, self-sacrifice and purity—in short, all the highest forms of "goodness". Plainly, therefore, once again, all these are not passive but highly *dynamic* qualities; and the "Idea of the Good" is not a pale phantom in some remote heaven of its own, but rather a shattering and irresistible power moulding all the forms of Being to its own high ends and purposes.

It is true, of course, that we can discover no *direct* evidence of this governing principle beyond the narrow confines of human history. But on the other hand, there is equally little evidence for absolutely restricting it to our own tiny globe. The probability is, rather, that among the millions of celestial bodies, composed in the main of the same elements as the earth and pursuing a line of development parallel to that of the sun, there are planets capable of supporting life and of evolving rational—and therefore (once again) moral—beings. Indeed, if the current theory of the origin of the solar system is valid, then the existence of man himself is due, originally, to the gravitational reactions between the ancient sun and some unknown star. Such an event may occur repeatedly; but in any case it suffices to link humanity, with all its rational and moral qualities, directly to the physical universe as a whole; and this is

¹ In *The Mind*, p. 39.

quite sufficient for my present argument. For it fully justifies us in holding that one of the main causes of the existence of Plato and Shakespeare, of Dante and Beethoven, lies in the colossal solar tides of bygone ages; so that just as the rational order and its allied aesthetic quality are universal, so the ethical order is also universal.

From this standpoint, then, personality may be regarded as one of the diamonds of the universal process. Just as every jewel is the final product of long periods of geological and chemical changes, of fierce heat and strong pressures, so the self is the ultimate outcome of all those precedent biological and psychological processes which contribute throughout to the "survival of the fittest"—"the fittest", in the end, being not merely the most rational but, still further, the most moral or most consistently ethical. The diamond, again, must undergo the delicate and even (to some degree) risky operations of cutting and polishing; only thus can it acquire its finest beauty and at the same time its highest value. Must we not, similarly, look upon man's stern and painful history, his endless struggles and agonies, his wanderings and defeats, as the indispensable "cutting and polishing" whereby alone the Universe can evolve its most precious products?—its immortal heroes and leaders, its thinkers and poets, enriching the world equally by their works and by their characters? As always, a poet has best expressed this truth:

A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!

Be our joys three-parts pain!
 Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
 Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

For thence,—a paradox
 Which comforts while it mocks,—
 Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail.

Finally then, just as we can never dissociate man from his environing and sustaining Universe, so the ethical character of the Universe must be interpreted as inseparable from controlling and dominating Deity. If these two adjectives offend our modern sensibilities, this is only because we adhere to the fatally inadequate conception of the highest Good as something that is merely passively beautiful—as an object to be contemplatively enjoyed instead of strenuously battled for. We are always and instinctively resentful of control and dominance; but this is the attitude only of the impatient child, and never of the warrior who trusts and obeys his commander. If therefore we adopt this finer and nobler attitude, we perceive “the indelibly ethical aspect” of Reality, when viewed as an unceasing dynamic process, to constitute the means of actualizing the divine purpose, and thus as a direct revelation of what I have described in an earlier volume as the divine holiness.¹

¹ *The Nature of Deity*, chap. vii. Apart of course from the specifically theistic interpretation of the facts, I believe my general standpoint is confirmed by Whitehead's recent insistence that “the novel fact may throw back, inhibit and delay. But the advance, when it does arrive, will be richer in content, more fully conditioned, and more stable” (*Process and Reality*, p. 315).

VI

"THE MOVING FINGER WRITES"

1. BUT although the ethical character of Reality undeniably constitutes a more direct revelation of Deity than does the marvellous mechanical structure, or even the aesthetic aspect, of the physical world, there remains possible a yet completer and more adequate manifestation; and this (still further) is necessitated by the conditions of moral experience itself, rooted as I have maintained these conditions to be in the very "nature of things". Now this implies, as I have insisted in the previous chapter, that in its full actuality "moral experience" is both all-inclusive and all-dominating, so that to restrict it to the narrow limits of everyday intercourse is simply to eviscerate it, as is clearly seen whenever any social crisis, either in legal or national affairs, forces some crucial issue into due prominence. For in all such instances the *final* and the *decisive* criterion must be an essentially *moral* criterion, which assumes precedence over both purely intellectual and purely aesthetic considerations;¹ although at the same time such considerations can never be wholly disregarded. On the contrary, as my entire argument has been intended to prove, all rational and artistic principles without exception, in so far as they claim to be applied in practice, must conform to those profounder ethical principles which sustain their own continued existence. It is no objection to urge that these "profounder ethical principles" are either still undiscovered or, whenever they are discovered, prove to

¹ This is becoming increasingly obvious, I think, in the League of Nations discussions; cf. the earlier passage (p. 115): "whenever the conflict is forced upon mankind. . . ."

be incessantly changing and therefore, at first sight, unstable and unreliable. To this I have already suggested two replies: first that not moral criteria only, but equally rational and aesthetic criteria, are all being continually recast, as is obvious alike in scientific theories, legal demands and artistic standards. "There is something radically wrong with the present fundamental conceptions of physics", observes Eddington. "Amid all our faulty attempts at expression the kernel of scientific truth steadily grows."¹ Secondly, therefore, such change is always far more than mere change, since it really constitutes unceasing expansion or development. It is simply because this expansion is (in principle) inexhaustible that human experience, in all directions alike, finds itself ever confronted, not by the unknowable, but certainly by the unknown in the sense that the application of any theory, and the employment of any standard, of themselves disclose new and increasingly difficult problems which far outrange the existing intellectual and moral equipment; and as so often before, this is perhaps most clearly seen in current science.

Moral experience is then both "all-inclusive and all-dominating"; and the latter term means that every ethical principle is essentially obligatory or imperative; it presents, in other words, the familiar "categorical imperative" of Kant's philosophy, and this in the same inescapable sense that one nation presents its diplomatic ultimatum to another; while whenever any such principle is modified or even discarded, it only yields place to some other principle more imperative than before. Such an advance is by no means unique, since it is plainly parallel to the steadily increasing logical necessity of newly established scientific truths, just as it is to the increased

¹ *The Nature of the Physical World*, pp. 179, 353.

social pressure of better laws and the rigorous necessity of the finest artistic standards.¹

But while all these diverse types of imperativeness may be formally accepted or submitted to, it is never sufficiently recognized that within their respective spheres they operate *selectively* in precisely the same way, and in the end with the same ruthless efficiency, as natural selection operates in the realm of life. In other words, to describe any principle, whether rational or legal, aesthetic or moral, as "imperative" means not only that it demands an implicit observance and obedience, but further that its neglect, and still more its defiance, inevitably incur some penalty that is wholly natural and never merely arbitrary. Every imperative principle, that is to say, is not merely *formally* imperative but *dynamically* imperative; if not, it is simply nugatory. As I have already argued, this is simply the logical consequence of the evolutionary principle, which regards all the various forms of necessity just referred to as expressing the conditions which rigorously control the continuous advance of existents to higher and higher stages, always in such a manner that every defiance of these conditions entails its own severe and sometimes fatal penalty.² Some biologists, indeed, agree with Osborn in accepting the hypothesis of "programme evolution", according to which every stage in the long and complicated process is predetermined throughout by definite, even though frequently unknown, causes. Every legal system, again, is a familiar instance of this general principle, and this the more clearly the more elevated the system becomes.

¹ Cf. my fuller consideration of this subject in *The Philosophic Basis of Moral Obligation*; also note 1, p. 101, note 3 *ante*.

² "The environment rather moulds the self by a severe discipline than nourishes it without interference" (Bosanquet, *Value and Destiny*, p. 132).

But so, equally, are the regulations of every ordinary and art school, in so far as ignorance and neglect are somehow or other penalized while their observance ensures the expansion of the student's capacities and the heightening of his powers; quite similarly with the "laws of health" or the drastic discipline of all well-trained armed forces. Whether or not we express this situation in terms of "punishment and reward" is irrelevant here, just as is the further question whether punishment should be retributive or reformatory. These additional important issues only illustrate the extreme complexity of the entire problem; and for my present argument it is sufficient to select three of its outstanding features: (1) that we are dealing throughout with dynamic agencies that are selective, in the already familiar sense of "natural selection", but on a far wider, and indeed on a universal, scale; (2) that any imperative principle whatever which does not thus operate is at bottom merely formal and nugatory; (3) that the entire sequence of events—the "punishments" on the one hand and the "rewards" on the other, if we so choose to regard them—are never arbitrary but wholly natural. It is of course true that every legal and regulative system prescribes to some degree penalties that are arbitrary; but at the same time it is steadily being more and more clearly recognized that all such arbitrariness defeats the really highest purposes of law and social discipline; and many recent tendencies in legislation and administration are obviously attempts to substitute for such artificial punishments others that are at once natural and rational.¹

2. These three conclusions have however still more important implications. For every consequence which is

¹ Similarly with current criticism of educational examination and "reward" methods.

"natural" is at bottom the effect of some specific cause;¹ and this is equally involved by all the types of necessity referred to in the preceding section. What I have just described as "dynamic necessity" is (in other words) only one fundamental aspect of the connection between causes and effects. "Necessity" means that this connection is invariable, while "dynamic" means that it is not merely formal but actual or real. To discuss the causal problem in all its aspects would entail too long a digression, so that its more technical features need be only briefly dealt with. It will therefore be sufficient to observe, that while the *expression* of a given causal connection, in words or symbols, may quite accurately be called "formal", still such an expression must not be confused with the actual connection itself as this occurs in Nature or in Reality. The relevant mathematical formula or equation *e.g.* is one thing; the sequence of actual events is quite another; and to substitute the former for the latter, as so many modern mathematicians, physicists and philosophers appear inclined to do, is just as illogical as to identify the legal deeds relating to an estate with the property itself. The solicitor, of course, deals with the documents precisely as the mathematician manipulates his equations; but to identify either of them with the realities to which they refer is a patent confusion. Nor, again, need "causation" be interpreted here in any so-called "metaphysical" or "metempirical" sense; it is quite enough for my present argument if the term denotes either invariable connections or invariable sequences, provided these are *real* connections and sequences, not the merely formal connections of purely scientific theory and expression.

¹ Or combination of causes; I am dealing not with the whole problem of Causation, but only with the general principle.

All such instances manifest then that "dynamic necessity" with which the modern mind is most familiar in the realm of Nature. But as soon as we realize still further that the legal system of every highly civilized country, so far as its regulations and penalties are concerned, attempts to abolish arbitrary and artificial connections and to substitute others more truly natural, we perceive that causal principles actually have a far wider application than within the sphere of natural science alone. This becomes still more obvious when penal systems are based upon strictly psychological principles; for then, plainly, criminal law identifies itself with natural law. And when, finally, we remember that it is always impossible to sever legal principles from ethical principles, and that national law, in the end, derives its own imperativeness from a still profounder moral imperativeness, it should be clear that the entire realm of moral experience is at the same moment the realm of invariable and necessary causation. In its simpler aspects, indeed, this standpoint has become quite commonplace—*e.g.* in what are everywhere accepted as the effects of vice on health and character, and also (as in educational systems) conversely.¹

Such similar facts are however only minor instances of the *universal* reign of causality throughout all moral experience; and any reluctance to admit this—to recognize the indestructible links which bind together moral causes and moral effects—has three main sources. The first of these, and the most important, is the truth that the sway of causation is identical with the sway of necessity; so that to maintain that the moral realm is also the arena of invariable causes appears completely to destroy moral freedom. Thus three alternatives arise: (a) to admit, with

¹ Cf. *International Journal of Ethics*, vol. xxxix, p. 481; "Causation and Moral Experience".

Spinoza, that the consciousness of individual freedom is always unreal and illusory; (b) to deny that causal connections are ever predominant, though they may be subordinate, in ethics, as Professor A. E. Taylor has recently done;¹ or (c) with Kant, to sunder moral freedom, as noumenal, from necessary sequence as phenomenal; while since the first of these three standpoints appears to commit us to an absolute determinism it is generally repudiated in favour of one of the others.

The second source of our reluctance to admit causation into moral experience consists in the idea that since this experience possesses a far higher value than the processes of Nature, it must therefore be controlled by its own peculiar and (in some sense or other) ultra-natural laws, thus once more being released from the unalterable causal nexus of Nature itself. This belief is strengthened by the third source in question here—that is the inextricable complexity of all human conduct, equally on the individual and the social levels, whenever *all* the factors are given their due consideration; for many of these are so transient and obscure, their interconnections are so highly intricate, while at the same time the period of their operation is often so prolonged, that it is only rarely possible to trace anything in the sphere of behaviour that can indubitably be termed a causal series.

The entire problem is thus as difficult as it is important. It cannot be denied that man's perennial hostility towards the doctrine that his life and character are throughout determined, in the sense that his freedom of choice and action is never actual but merely apparent, is thoroughly justified whether it is purely "instinctive" or to some degree rationalized; while I have also maintained through-

¹ *Contemporary British Philosophy*, vol. ii, pp. 273 *sqq.* Also *The International Journal of Ethics*, vol. xxxvii, pp. 419 *sqq.*

out that moral experience occupies a far higher level of Being than any purely natural processes.¹ Nevertheless these two standpoints are fully consistent with the principle just enunciated—"that the entire realm of moral experience is at the same time the realm of invariable and necessary causation", although this contention in no sense conflicts with the reality of human freedom; in this latter respect I agree with Kant as against Spinoza. To discuss this subject at greater length would be to repeat the arguments already advanced in my earlier volumes, to which therefore I must refer while restricting myself here to two salient features of the situation.² The most familiar of these is the fact that national liberty always consists in the capacity for "self-determination"—that is in the unrestricted power to control policy and action from within the nation itself, instead of submitting to any dictation from without. Historically, this has formed the goal and ideal of every struggle for freedom, equally in the case of countries and of slaves. But "to control policy and action"—to decide one's own future and destiny—is obviously to set some causes or other in train, in the belief that these will ultimately yield certain desired effects. In all systematic education (to repeat) and equally in large scale commercial, financial and social enterprises, as again in well-conceived national diplomacy, success plainly depends on the most precise planning and carrying out of complicated and delicately adjusted sequences of

¹ That is if "natural" is used in its ordinary meaning; for it may of course be urged that "natural" should be extended so as to include "moral". But this, obviously, is to elevate "natural".

² *Personality and Reality*, p. 102; "the self is a self-determining real, capable within certain limits of freely controlling the evolution both of itself and of its surroundings". Cf. also pp. 109, 183; and further *The Nature of Deity* and *The Philosophic Basis of Moral Obligation*, Index, "Freedom", "Self-determination".

events which are, in actuality, *causal* sequences. The methods of dealing with a severe epidemic, for example, are in principle identical with those of every good physician or surgeon; but these latter are purely scientific, and therefore purely *causal*, methods. This does not mean, however, that such causes are exclusively material; on the contrary the modern physician, and still more every good educator, must employ agencies that are certainly immaterial or psychical or spiritual, but are none the less *causes*. Here we perceive the second feature which demands attention, in the steadily expanding application of psychological principles to the analysis of human conduct, thereby laying bare the motives and ideals, the purposes and impulses both conscious and unconscious, which actually direct—and again *causally* direct—its devious course, alike in the individual as in the activities which pertain to the social sciences in general. So long as these psychical or spiritual causes pursue their normal course and produce their due effects (which are likewise psychical or spiritual), so long the self enjoys and uses its real freedom; only when some abnormality intervenes does it become the victim of those lower instincts, impulses and appetites by which animals are always enslaved.¹

3. But these conclusions lead us back not only to the psychological and sociological, but equally to the moral realm, wherein cause and effect cease to be material and tangible, and become in the highest sense spiritual; only, with this, not a whit less truly *causal*. I have just observed that "I agree with Kant as against Spinoza" in regarding personal freedom as being real and not illusory. On the other hand, to maintain that moral

¹ This does not mean that such animal characters are in themselves evil. They plainly sustain animal life itself most effectively, and also have their part to play within human experience; only when they become abnormal do they become harmful.

experience is always and essentially causal plainly controverts the Kantian principle that moral experience, since it falls within the noumenal sphere, must be non-causal or super-causal—the familiar method whereby he sought to conserve the unimpaired actuality of moral freedom. But his thoroughgoing antithesis between the phenomenal and the noumenal plainly implies, within the entire range of human experience, an absolute discontinuity which finds little support from that experience itself, and is also directly opposed to the modern tendency of thought, already referred to, which discovers unmistakable causal sequences equally in social as in individual life. On both grounds therefore Kant's antithesis must in my opinion be discarded, thus bringing moral experience not only within the same sphere as intellectual and aesthetic experience but, still further, within the causational realm which also includes the purely natural processes of the brain and the body in general. This however does not mean that all these widely contrasted aspects of life are on exactly one and the same level, nor that they all possess exactly the same value. On the contrary, I have already insisted that "moral experience is not merely all-inclusive but also all-dominating";¹ at the same time its supremacy can be actually maintained only through the operation of *causes* which, though undeniably psychical and spiritual, nevertheless operate on exactly the same principles as do physical and physiological causes. To use an illustration, moral dictates are unquestionably supreme just as a king or president is supreme; but they can make themselves effective only by means of moral causes and effects just as the ruler must employ due processes of law; while the factor of an irresistible necessity in both instances alike is per-

¹ P. 122 *ante*.

factly obvious and extremely significant. In this connection, still further, it must be remembered that even Kant admitted that "in the world of phenomena there would be no action which we could not anticipate with certainty, and recognize to be absolutely necessary from its preceding conditions", at the same time asserting freedom of action to subsist in the noumenal realm alone.¹

The next question that arises is therefore: What are the universal principles of all causal activity, in whichever particular sphere it may be manifested? I have already referred to two of these principles: (a) the *invariability* of causal sequences, and (b) their *selective* action whenever they are seen to operate for long periods and on a large scale; and in this respect it is clear that no cause whatever can be fully understood until its entire range of influence, either in space or in time or in both together, has been ascertained. The conditions of research, of course, compel us drastically to delimit specific cause-effect connections in order to analyse them; but to isolate them permanently plainly destroys their continuity with Nature or Reality as a whole, so that as soon as fuller knowledge permits they must be replaced in their due position within the endless causal sequence from which they were first of all derived. Now whenever this is done—whenever, that is to say, a "large scale" view of causation can be obtained—its operation is found to be selective, in the well-known sense of "natural selection" as this affects the realms of life, mind and society. But we must now observe further that precisely the same principle of rigorous selection prevails throughout the entire physical universe, although owing to the unfamiliar space-time dimensions involved it cannot be so easily discerned. Specific modes of atomic and electronic vibration, specific

¹ *Critique of Pure Reason* (Bohn), p. 340.

orbits for the revolution of planets and of electrons, are selected while others are excluded, just as some specific configurations and masses are possible, and others impossible, both in the structure of the stars and in their combination into systems more or less resembling the solar system.¹ It should be needless to say, in view of my repeated insistence on the absolute automatism of the material universe, that this selection is not, directly and primarily, a *conscious* selection; but neither is the natural selection of living species and organisms conscious; both types alike are the final resultants of the purely mechanical action of causal agencies.² We are here concerned, however, only with the *universality* of this selectiveness which, while obvious in the realm of life, is much more difficult to discern equally in the material and the moral spheres, and in both for one and the same reason—that is the extreme complexity of the phenomena combined with the unfamiliar range of their space-time characteristics. As I have already observed, only a "large scale" survey of human history brings its essentially selective nature clearly into view—good, in the long run, being conserved and evil eradicated; our limited vision, unfortunately, makes it appear to us to be a painfully long run.

4. This invariability and selectiveness of the entire causational process must now be associated with its third, and still more important feature—(c) its *irreversi-*

¹ The technical aspects of these phenomena find expression in the Quantum Theory. For a general outline of the facts cf. Eddington's *Stars and Atoms*.

² That is, of course, in the first instance, and subject to the further qualifications advanced in the present volume and its predecessors. In animals, again, their consciousness itself plays an important part in the entire development; but it clearly does not control the situation as a whole.

bility. For no effect, once it has been produced, can ever be actually destroyed, though it may certainly be occasionally compensated; but even this, again, can be done only through some specific cause whose existence has been necessitated or demanded by the effect in question, which thus remains an eternally persisting factor throughout the entire later sequence, since every further effect without exception itself becomes a cause. This "compensation", however, is much more apparent than real. If e.g. my pen rolls off the table, it seems that I can readily replace it in its original position; conceding this somewhat debatable point, it is obvious that it forms only one feature of the entire situation which, when taken in its completeness, can unquestionably never be exactly restored; for both the pen and my temper will have been injured, no matter how infinitesimally; while at the same time the centre of gravity of the earth, and indeed of the solar system, has—again infinitesimally—been displaced. "The attraction between small spheres of lead in a laboratory must depend" (observes Haas) "on the girth and mass of the whole universe."¹ Similarly (as Whitehead maintains) the influence of every electron radiates itself throughout the physical universe; and this, it must now be recognized, it does unalterably and irrevocably.²

If all this is true of such trivial occurrences, it must be still truer and far more significant in more important

¹ *The New Physics*, p. 150.

² Cf. Jeans's vivid illustration: "Each time the child throws its toy out of its baby-carriage, it disturbs the motion of every star. So long as gravitation acts, no disturbance can be confined to any area less than the whole of space" (*The Universe Around Us*, p. 198). Somewhat more technically, this is the "hypothesis of the immanence of the entire universe, namely, that isolation is impossible, or that the rest of the universe, no matter how distant, always has a local effect on at least some phenomena" (Bridgman, *The Logic of Modern Physics*, p. 183; cf. p. 185).

affairs. Even the regain of perfect health is impossible apart from some permanent alteration in the individual's condition; he can never be, in all respects, precisely what he was originally. Such "compensations" are therefore never more than partial; while the higher the level of experience, and the more valuable the factors entering into the situation, the more inadequate and illusory must compensation become. A broken limb may heal; a bankrupt may become solvent again; a discredited statesman may regain power, and a declining nation fame; but never, under any circumstances whatever, without some persistent and often radical change having occurred which leaves an absolutely indelible impression, however skilfully it may be concealed. For even if all else could possibly be restored, still memory would retain within itself the unalterable past; and whether this alleviates or intensifies the situation is irrelevant; since what we are here concerned with is the resultant permanence of irreversibility as it bears upon moral experience. As Aeschylus taught of old, "Human action is irrevocable, and sin must ever be expiated by suffering".¹

For so far as ethics is concerned, there must always be considered not only the act but also the agent—not merely the deed, but likewise the individual. In accordance with what has just been said, every act is a cause which produces its own indelible effects; and some of these effects, which in the present connection are the most significant, permanently alter the personality of the agent. Every deed, in its own way and degree, makes the self different from what it was before—either better or worse; and this again not in any merely haphazard fashion, since every action takes its due place in a more or less coherent series or system, as is most obvious in the deliberate

¹ Adam, *The Religious Teachers of Greece*, p. 145.

pursuit of some definite aim—*e.g.* the policy of a great statesman or the plans of an able financier or general; and even the most commonplace life approximates to this ideal to some extent. This means that every act has a twofold aspect: as external, it expresses the character of the doer, while at the same time, as internal, it modifies that character in exactly the same way (in principle) that firing a gun causes the recoil with all its less obvious, but not less important, consequences. Taken in its entirety therefore, conduct is inseparably unified with the self-development of personality; the first is the outer, and the second the inner, aspect of a single course of development which is always—it must be emphatically repeated—inescapably subjected to the most fundamental feature of causation—its absolute irreversibility.

Now the entire course of action, and with this the development of the self, are in the end controlled throughout by those endlessly diverse ideals of which the self is more or less definitely conscious and which, more or less successfully, it incessantly strives to realize. However obscure these ideals may become and however incompletely they may be attained, still they always form the ultimate determinant of conduct in so far as this is volitional. But precisely because they *are* ideals, they must always transcend the self's actual achievement. For every ideal, *as* an ideal, is slowly generated by each individual's actual experience; this is true in even the most extreme case when an ideal is accepted *in toto* from some external source—from some other person or community or doctrine; even under these exceptional conditions it has still emerged from *some* person's experience, and must similarly be incorporated within the experience of the one who adopts it before it can become *his* ideal; nor (finally) would he adopt it at all unless it appeared to

transcend his previous ideals, and therewith his previous achievements.

All this constitutes the subjective aspect of ideals; objectively, on the other hand, every ideal is taken to express or reveal some characteristic of Reality which demands, and demands *imperatively*, to be realized by its pursuer. I do not mean of course that the situation is clearly envisaged in these terms; that can be done only after a philosophic analysis which few ever attempt. But even the criminal acts in accordance with an ideal which he feels he *must* realize in order to be in his own way successful and happy; he is therefore just as keenly conscious of an absolute obligation as the saint and martyr; and this means that the criminal's "world" or "universe" presents itself to him in such a way that certain deeds *must* be done if that "world" is to endure. Needless to say his "world", though intensely real to him, is not the real world; it is on the contrary an illusory "world", which must therefore in the end collapse and ruin both itself and him. It follows, then, that if even bad ideals possess imperativeness and at the same time reveal what is taken to be real, still more must all good ideals enjoy a far higher imperativeness and at the same time manifest Reality, as such, in some way and to some degree; though never of course exhaustively. The contrast here is identical with that between the buoys which accurately mark out a sea channel, and those which do so incorrectly and inadequately; in both instances alike the navigator feels that their exact positions *must* be observed, while in the one case they lead him to disaster, and in the other to his port simply because the former indicate the structure of *the* real physical world.

If now we extend this maritime analogy to the moral realm, we must add (first) that the course to be pursued

is not only exceedingly tortuous and difficult but is also endless; while (secondly) the navigator—that is the self—too frequently departs from the true course deliberately, simply because it seems to him easier and pleasanter to do so; and it is at this crucial point that the universal principle of irreversibility of the effects produced comes into play.

For the imperativeness or obligatoriness of every ideal—even of bad ideals to those who continue to pursue them—is a permanent and absolute imperativeness; it may be ignored and defied, but never destroyed. Always it revives and presents itself anew with undiminished severity, bringing also the ever deepening consciousness of two vitally important features—first of the cumulative yet inescapable penalties for its neglect, and secondly of the individual's shrinking capacity to meet its unrelaxed demands. In these two respects, in fact, it is noteworthy that the mentality of clever criminals is much more instructive than is that of ordinary persons, since the former are always much more keenly conscious than are the latter both of the objective risks of failure and of the subjective results of slackness; and the same is equally true in the case of all athletes and artists. But this clarity of vision, as before, is only the natural consequence of the relative simplicity of the given situations; for in each instance alike the desired end is definite and clear, and the external and internal penalties of failure swift and complete; whereas (as I have previously maintained) the far higher complexity of the moral sphere inevitably conceals its governing laws, obscures its operative causes, and defers its final consequences.

5. Here then we may apply what we learn from the evil self to the experience of the good self. For in spite of the absolute contrast between good and evil, it is clear that

the two types of selfhood share so many important features in common that it is almost sufficient to say that the evil self may be regarded as a good self, save for the fundamental fact that it is headed in the diametrically wrong direction. Exactly like an excellent navigator who is, for his own narrow purposes, intent on wrecking the ship, similarly many wrongdoers have great capacities, and even, in a certain limited sense, fine ideals,¹ all of which are however devoted to wrong ends. Another link of connection lies in the truth that no individual is perfectly good; everyone is tainted by some evil, however negligible this may be thought to be; and it is just this fact that must now be considered. For the deep contrast between the good self and the bad is most fully and clearly manifested in their respective attitudes to the morally evil traits which both alike possess. The former seeks to purify himself from these, while the latter makes no such effort, and may indeed intensify them; and this brings us to the crux of the entire moral situation—an issue which, curiously enough, hardly ever receives adequate attention in ethical theory.

For as soon as man endeavours to realize any of his moral ideals as he finds they imperatively demand to be, he discovers that he can never do so. In the first place, he has repeatedly betrayed or abandoned them, sometimes unintentionally, sometimes deliberately; and even when he has done his best, still he recognizes that his highest achievements have fallen short in one way or another. This holds true even in those spheres which are generally regarded as non-moral, such as art and athletics, when there frequently arises a keen sense of inadequacy, or at least of misgiving as to whether the best possible means

¹ As *e.g.* when a cat-burglar maintains his sound physique, or a fraudulent financier his keen intellectual ability.

have been adopted and the maximum effort put forth. It is indeed almost a platitude to say that one indisputable condition of artistic excellence is the maintenance of a severely self-critical attitude, whereas self-complacency is quickly penalized by deterioration; while since "moral experience, in its full actuality, is all-inclusive",¹ any absolute exclusion of art as non-moral is quite unjustifiable. Aesthetic ideals are in truth identical with ethical ideals in so far as they both exhibit a necessity which imperatively claims to determine action, and also both reveal certain essential attributes of the real Universe; while moral self-complacency is always several degrees more intolerable, and much more rapidly fatal, than even the artistic form, since it vitiates not merely one side of personality but the whole.

The fact is, of course, that at every level of experience alike man is faced by the irreversibility of causation. He can therefore never actually evade the consequences of his own shortcomings; and although we must at once add that he must equally inevitably benefit by his good deeds, still (as I have argued in the previous section) the resultant compensation can under the most favourable conditions never be other than partial; there always persists some residuum that is quite ineradicable. And the reason for this is plain and simple. We have already seen that every failure, and especially every *deliberate* dereliction, has consequences both external and internal—both objective and subjective. Just as every physical movement affects the earth's centre of gravity, and just as every electron radiates its influence throughout all space, so every action disturbs the spiritual "centre of gravity", and every self, no matter how insignificant, leaves its due impression upon the social organism. Occasionally, of course, this

¹ *Ante p.* 122.

becomes quite patent, as when the crime of some hitherto obscure and illiterate person sets the machinery of the law in motion and may even involve some important modifications of its procedure;¹ such instances however only bring into prominence what is always present but unnoticed; and not only present but (to repeat) persistent and ineradicable. Similarly with the internal or subjective effects of every bad action, which—once more like the recoil of a gun—must always modify, and sometimes modify most profoundly, the agent's own personality, always in the direction of rendering him less competent to pursue and realize his ideals than he was previously; for it is, of course, by such imperceptible stages that character degenerates in the first instance, however sudden and unexpected the final catastrophe may be. The net result therefore is a handicap, often extremely serious, which must ever militate against the individual's further moral striving; he thus resembles a swimmer or boxer who is forced to struggle, though increasingly burdened by some marked physical defect.²

It is this situation, as I have already observed, which has received scant consideration in ethical theory, mainly concerned as this has been with moral ideals themselves rather than with the individual's response to these; or more strictly, with the *inadequacy* of his response, which now leads on to two further points of vital importance. Thus far, we have found that man must unreservedly admit the truth of Omar's quatrain—

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on; nor all thy Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.

This is the very reverse of being merely metaphorical, as

¹ *E.g.* the recent Infanticide Act.

² *Cf.* p. 188 below.

we too often like to believe; it is, on the contrary, simply the essence of the principle of causational irreversibility. But at the same time (1) the original ideals retain both their pristine integrity and their drastic imperativeness; (2) the self desires most earnestly to "cancel" and "wash out" the irremediable past, recognizing this to be impossible only with great reluctance, as the almost universal belief in the efficacy of compensation amply proves; and this again often becomes most obvious in the criminal's keen regret over the failure of his carefully planned schemes. But "the great mass of men, however little they may think about the order of the universe, have a sense that evil is in the nature of man and to some extent his own fault, not imposed upon him by a celestial tyrant. Men have tortured their minds with trying to discover the origin of evil; but even the most despairing have seldom imputed it to the tyranny of a god, at least not since they have developed moral ideas and got some mastery over nature."¹ Still sharper is the remorse of the good self; while the higher its type, the more intense is its futile sorrow; with the radical difference, however, that while the confirmed criminal is concerned primarily with the external and objective consequences of his own incompetence, the good self laments rather its *subjective* aspects—that is the more or less complete crippling of its native capacity to meet the obligatory demands of its chosen ideals; and, finally, even its partial success only serves to reveal their inexhaustibility more and more clearly. Thus his ideals stimulate and deride him at one and the same moment; and the better he himself becomes, the more poignantly, yet also the more unmistakably, does he realize that he can never attain what he must still most passionately

¹ Clutton-Brock, *Shelley*, p. 182.

desire; so that he is often tempted to discard his finest ideals completely, and seek instead others that are lower or even positively bad.

Now however much each of us must sympathize with such pessimistic moods, if only because we have ourselves experienced them, still it is quite impossible to palliate them. For it is universally recognized that no truly great artist, nor for that matter any fine soldier nor athlete, would ever thus abandon his pursuit of the highest possible achievements; and everyone who actually does this immediately sinks in the general estimation, which thus unmistakably indicates the standard that we subconsciously appeal to, however reluctant we may be to apply it to ourselves. It must therefore be clearly recognized that the working ideal which is unquestioningly submitted to in the aesthetic and intellectual spheres is identical with the ideal which governs the moral sphere. More truly indeed, in accordance with the all-inclusiveness of moral experience, it is actually one and the same ideal which manifests itself in widely varying forms in each of these distinct spheres alike; so that it is, at bottom, *morally* wrong for either thinker or artist consistently to work below their finest possible levels. In every aspect alike, therefore, the characters of this universal ideal are the same, only they can be more clearly discerned in thought and knowledge than in conduct: these characters being necessity, imperativeness, and transcendence of actual achievement, inseparably associated with the demand that every infringement shall be made good at the risk of an inescapable penalty which is never arbitrary, but perfectly logical and natural.

6. It is plainly only under these rigorous conditions that knowledge and art can ever attain to any high level of development and proceed to transcend that level—a

process which becomes ever more and more difficult, simply because these ruling conditions operate ever more and more stringently.¹ Especially significant in this respect is the steadily expanding *degree of precision* that is demanded. This is most readily appreciated in an accountant's balance sheet prepared for some large company or important bank, whose affairs may ramify over the whole globe. Here any marked intellectual laxity rapidly becomes most serious—and again not only commercially but also morally, as every colossal fraud amply proves. But the essential point is that this financial exactitude is, in its real nature, wholly identical with that absolute precision which forms one ideal of all science,² particularly of course in mathematics, and equally of all great art—

The little more, and how much it is!

And the little less, and what worlds away!

In both science and art, again, it is obvious that every falling off from this elevated standard is in its own way inevitably penalized and must also be remedied, while deliberate neglect to do this is (once again) *morally* indefensible.

Art and science however, despite their unquestioned importance and value, are after all only limited sections of human experience in its entirety; and although even with them (as I have already argued) full compensation is never really possible, so that every lapse produces some effects that are quite ineradicable, still these may be dismissed as in actuality comparatively unimportant. For while the consequences of past aesthetic and intellectual faults can never be completely remedied in every respect, still they can generally be reduced to a negligible

¹ Cf. note p. 109 *ante*.

² Cf. p. 102 *ante*, note 3.

minimum; and—what is of far greater importance—such errors themselves are rarely persisted in and repeated, simply because their penalties are so patent and so immediate; while whenever an artist does permit himself to become the victim of some early defect, we obtain unquestionable evidence of the literally ineradicable nature of the result in the permanent impoverishment of his entire work.¹

But as soon as we pass beyond these limited spheres to the entirety of human behaviour and life, every one of the features under consideration becomes immeasurably intensified. Unintentionally or deliberately, evil is persisted in either because of its immediate pleasures or because its final consequences are remote and obscure; while its effects are no longer negligible, but widespread, permanent and serious. So far as our present problem is concerned, the result of this is threefold: (1) there develops an ineradicable tainting or vitiation of personality which is identical with, but far more penetrating than, the unmistakable stamp which any marked defect produces on an artist; (2) there also arises in the good self, and even (as we have seen) in a minor degree in the bad self, an inextinguishable desire both to remove this taint and to compensate for its external or objective consequences in the world at large; (3) finally, there emerges the growing recognition that this desire can never be fulfilled—the deepening conviction that the self is in the grip of a relentless causal sequence which can no more be relaxed than can gravitation or heredity, even though it may (as can these) be somewhat alleviated. Now the better the

¹ The peculiar character of Blake's early training and work seems to be a marked instance of this. This may also be true of Swinburne. "Swinburne," observes Nicolson, "was and remains eternally immature, and his poetry suffers thereby" (*Swinburne*, p. 141).

self, the more clearly are these three conditions realized for what they are, however passionate may be the resentment they arouse; while the repentance of the evil self is often marked by an unusually keen sense of all these features—alike of its own hopeless and incurable condition and of the necessity to make some attempt at fully adequate compensation which is nevertheless foredoomed to failure.

It is quite true that this reaction becomes most marked in extreme cases such as *e.g.* drug victims; but this is no argument against the universal applicability of the foregoing principles, any more than would be the objection that because a fever or epidemic is extreme and unusual, therefore the laws of health apply only to them and not to the minor ailments of everyday life. The very intensity of such reactions, indeed, is most probably due to the fact that the good self has been long submerged (as it were) beneath the evil self, so that its truest instincts have had no outlet until reformation permits them to appear in what has been all along their real character. This suggestion is confirmed by the familiar truth that the higher the level of personality in the spheres of knowledge, art and conduct alike, the more sensitive does the self become to its own shortcomings and the more insistent on somehow compensating for these. It is a Newton who is most ready to confess his own ignorance; humility and ability being here inseparable, despite the occasional insincere exaggerations of such an attitude.

Thus we find, I believe, that the same general and powerful principle is manifesting itself throughout each of these distinct aspects of man's experience, markedly contrasted though they are with each other—to such a degree, in fact, that the essentially non-moral character of art has become almost proverbial. And while I have argued

that this may be true of cheap and trivial art, but is grotesquely false of all great art, still it is here unnecessary to insist on this point.¹ For the general principle of which we are in search may now be expressed somewhat as follows: every high type of personality is more or less clearly conscious that it exists in a certain "world"—of art, of knowledge or of moral goodness as the case may be. Even the schoolboy or the average citizen feels that he is ruled by some "tradition"—by the past history and record of his school and college, his regiment and nation—which presents to him demands and standards that are often extremely insistent. In this respect, again, it must be realized that the boy and youth give an excellent example to the apathetic adult, since it is in their sometimes exaggerated punctiliousness that the governing ideal, after all, finds its best mode of expressing itself. The *essential* point is that any lapse from "good form", any violation of "tradition", no matter how artificial this may have become, tends to sever the individual from his environing "world"; while whenever his fault becomes too gross and patent this severance at once becomes absolute and complete—the boy is "sent to Coventry", the officer degraded or cashiered, the social offender blackballed and "cut dead"; after which no future attempt at compensation may ever be adequate.²

It is easily possible, of course, to carry these condemnatory attitudes to too extreme lengths. But such instances are after all exceptional, and are usually followed by their own form of mitigation or compensation. But in itself, when regarded in its entirety, the governing principle is felt to be thoroughly sound, and indispensable

¹ Cf. p. 91 *ante* on "art for art's sake".

² I may refer to the earlier discussion of etiquette, pp. 88, 99 *ante*; the artificiality referred to often springs from the desire to possess some characteristic that is unmistakably distinctive.

therefore to every highly organized society. Thus in the end, as in so many previous instances, the ruling social conditions merge insensibly into the specifically moral situation and serve clearly to reveal its actual character; it is in this respect therefore that their implications must next be considered.

VII

UNIVERSAL IDEALS AND DEITY

I. TOWARDS the conclusion of the previous chapter we found that "every high type of personality is more or less clearly conscious that it exists in a certain world of art, or knowledge" or society as the case may be; this is true if the society is only the school or team or regiment. When therefore we apply this general principle to moral experience as such, again we observe that the self exists within a "world" which now, however, becomes the real world or Universe. This is the reason why moral experience is, in principle, "all-inclusive and all-dominating", underlying and sustaining every healthy tradition so long of course as its original health has not become impaired by artificiality; while in the sense that not moral goodness alone but equally intellectual and artistic excellence of all kinds are spiritual excellences, so the Universe which they together constitute must be a spiritual Universe—a spiritual Reality¹ which manifests its exhaustless diversity alike in the "worlds" of art and knowledge, of goodness and religion. It is only the apathy of the average individual, as contrasted with the keenness of the scientist and the enthusiasm of the artist, that can justify any attempts to sever the former of these from the latter.

In precisely the same sense therefore, though on a far wider and profounder scale, that the boy who despises or violates the tradition of his school finds himself to be out of touch with his "world", while to persist in his recalcitrance is actually to defy that world and ultimately to be excluded from it, so every lapse in conduct, and still more every deliberately evil action, naturally and

¹ Cf. Preface.

inevitably cause an analogous severance between the self and its spiritual Universe. Further, and in accordance with my earlier argument, this severance must be permanent to a greater or less degree, because there always arise some form and degree of permanent vitiation of personality which can never be completely removed nor adequately compensated. In so far, again, as the self is free and its behaviour therefore deliberate, the self alone is responsible for its own consequent isolation. It cannot be objected that *every* act, without any exception, is due to the influence of the "Unconscious", nor to heredity nor instinct, powerful and sometimes irresistible though these factors undeniably are. Such suggestions are not only repudiated in practical affairs of discipline and law, but are also quite unwarranted by theoretical Psychology as such;¹ and as I have already argued, it is frequently the evil self, once its own evil has become fully realized, that most clearly perceives the impassable gulf which it has created between itself and the spiritual Universe from which it feels itself banished; and this not by any arbitrary edict, but solely by its own acts and its own unfitness, exactly as a careless boy accepts his omission from the first eleven.

In addition to all this, it must next be observed that the impulse to compensate for wrong-doing, already incidentally discussed, presents three fundamentally significant features. In the first place, it is *inherent* in human nature, both in the sense that it is universal except in those very rare and extreme cases in which it has become completely obliterated by gross evil itself, and that

¹ "It cannot be asserted that sexuality is the only fundamental instinct of the mind, therefore every explanation on a sexual basis can be only a partial explanation, never an all-sufficing psychological theory" (Jung, *Contributions to Analytical Psychology*, p. 22: cf. further pp. 32, 64, 288, 314, 340-7, 363).

(conversely) it is always most powerful in the most refined and elevated natures. To make no attempt whatever to right the wrong is justly reckoned to be the depth of infamy; while in contrast with this, a noble character is prepared to sacrifice everything rather than to perpetuate even an unintentional injustice. The instinct yields the surest indication of contrition, just as it is the first condition of forgiveness and reinstatement. Secondly, it is *altruistic*; men are often eager to compensate not only their own shortcomings but those of others whom they deeply love. A father will discharge his son's debts or even, if he be permitted, undergo punishment in his stead; an officer will sacrifice his own life to conceal his commander's error or incompetence, and a political leader accept the entire blame rather than allow his party's honour to be impugned. The prudent may condemn all this as foolish generosity, but the wise realize its deep truth and nobility. Thirdly, it is the *motive* for this altruism that is most significant of all. Often, of course, it is inspired by natural affection, or by the desire to save those we love from suffering; but this in itself may conflict with the reasonable demands of justice and discipline, and so cause in the end more harm than good; while it is plain that, beyond one's own intimate circle, these purely emotional impulses can have no force; they do not inspire *e.g.* the devotion of the soldier and the patriot. It is therefore only in these finer and less restricted instances that the highest motive can be discerned; and this is the desire not merely to avoid suffering, but rather to safeguard some cherished ideals whose demands are felt to be absolutely imperative—once again the glorious traditions of a regiment, the untarnished integrity of a party, the honour of a nation, the ethical and religious standards of a church; and although the scale is plainly diminished,

it is precisely the same principle that actuates the boy's attitude to his team or school, since this is really the germ of his adult standard of honour.

We must therefore generalize all these essential features of what is actually a highly complex situation; and to say that the impulse to compensate for wrong (*a*) is inherent in humanity, (*b*) is recognized to be absolutely imperative, (*c*) is thus most clearly recognized by the finest types of character, and finally (*d*) is sustained by devotion to objective and irresistibly dominating ideals, is in effect to say that these ideals express the categorical demand which the real world, or the Universe, presents to the human spirit at each and every stage—alike to the schoolboy and to the hero and martyr. Such ideals, in other words, are either subconsciously felt or distinctly recognized to express the sole conditions under which the self can sustain its own highest development; so that to violate these conditions, in any way and to any degree, inevitably involves some vitiation of personality and some form of inescapable penalty.

But it is equally plain that these ideals, when taken as they must be in their entirety, manifest the constitution of the Universe as a spiritual Universe. For to describe them as objective and obligatory, as incessantly and irresistibly operative, is only to say that they are real—real, in precisely the same sense, but on a far higher level, that physical energy and life are real; since these too possess exactly the same characteristics, only as more easily and clearly discernible. The realm of life *e.g.* most rigorously conditions both the existence of the individual and the evolution of the species, exactly as the physical world conditions the persistence alike of atoms and stellar systems.¹ What we are actually dealing with, in

¹ Cf. p. 133 *ante*.

each of these instances alike, is the nature or constitution of the real Universe as an organized structure, which in the long run maintains its own integrity unimpaired by sternly penalizing every violation of its laws.

Whenever therefore man seeks to compensate for any wrong or shortcoming he is, at bottom, seeking not merely to ward off the inevitable penalty, not merely to avert suffering from himself nor from those whom he loves, not merely to purify and reintegrate a vitiated personality, but still more to protect and sustain whatever ideals may claim his devotion—to wipe out a defeat on the battlefield, to remove some stigma from his party's record or his nation's history, to retrieve bad work in art or moral lapse in conduct. Throughout all these endlessly diverse instances there operates one and the same ultimate principle which governs all the subsidiary aims just alluded to—that is to maintain unimpaired, or at least to restore, the integrity of that particular "world" of which he is a member and whose character is manifested in his ideals; while, finally, every such "world"—of art or sport or law—is but one aspect of the all-inclusive Universe which reveals its nature, and presents its imperative demands, in those supreme human ideals which we call ethical or spiritual; and this because, at bottom, we realize them to be "all-inclusive and all-dominating".

2. If, once again, we regard this situation from the standpoint of the individual, it is usually described in terms of the fuller realization of personality. The self is said to be pursuing, and in some degree achieving, an ever more complete expression of its own real nature. This is of course undeniable, and has already been urged in my earlier arguments. But two further points must here be noted which usually seem to me to be minimized. The first is that the individual is himself an element of

Reality, precisely as the atom, the living cell and the animal are elements of Reality, with the fundamental difference, of course, that he is self-conscious, rational and moral, and (within certain limits) free. The expansion of selfhood is therefore, in essence, one of the many forms of the continuous development of the Universe, exactly as is the evolution of life in general; so that to focus attention on the individual, as such, inevitably narrows and distorts the actual situation, just as it would do to concentrate on any single species of plant or animal.¹ I have insisted throughout that the nature of personality is capable of throwing a flood of light on the nature of the Universe.² But this is also true, though to a less degree, of every important category; and in the end each of these, including personality itself, must be interpreted from the viewpoint of the Universe, and not conversely. So regarded, the familiar doctrine of "self-realization" finds its proper place in philosophic theory as subject to the general principles already outlined.

The second point, likewise too frequently ignored, is still more important. For when we apply the conclusions of the preceding chapter to the ideal of self-realization we are compelled to recognize that, so far as the self is concerned, its complete realization is an impossible ideal in two senses. In the first place, the irreversibility of causation—the impossibility of altering both past events and their present effects—makes every effort to maintain our ideals absolutely unimpaired futile in advance; and

¹ This must of course be done on due occasion by some specialist; but the inherent defects of specialization are patent. From the biological viewpoint, "wherever we turn we see exclusive specialization associated with vulnerability" (MacCurdy, *Common Principles*, p. 265).

² Cf. p. 26 *ante*; "it has working in it the spirit of the whole" (Bosanquet, *Value and Destiny*, p. 132).

thus they become ideals in that bad sense of the term which indicates purposes that can under no conditions be fully realized. In spite of this, however, it still remains true that every attempt to achieve even these impossible ideals must elevate selfhood, precisely as every attempt to ascend Everest expands the personality of the climber, although he may never actually reach its summit. Repeated failures, then, need not and do not deter athletes from strenuous endeavour; their real and ultimate aim may nevertheless remain ever unattainable. Now in the specifically moral sphere the ultimate aim of the self is unattainable, no matter how far its subsidiary aims may be achieved. For not only is man confronted by irreversible causation and the unalterable past, but the consequent vitiation of his own personality likewise frustrates his every attempt "to restore the integrity" of the spiritual Universe which, in countless ways, has been violated. Thus the compensation which the self instinctively seeks to render can never be more than partial, simply because it is demanded not only from others but first and foremost from itself, while at the same moment the evil which itself has done and suffered incapacitates it always to some extent, and in extreme cases fatally. The embezzler may return all his illicit gains and more; the libeller may confess his falsehoods and the conqueror restore his spoils; but in no instance can the compensation be absolutely adequate in all respects. For even though the material harm may be made good, the spiritual damage on both sides is irreparable; there must ever remain the record of blemished honour—the unfading "blot in the 'scutcheon'" of humanity.

Morally and spiritually, then, man is subjected to the Sisyphean doom of eternal failure, yet eternal toil; and this not in any merely isolated aspects of his experience

but throughout its whole extent, since (to repeat) moral sanctions and standards are in the end "all-dominating". The entire history of religion, with its black records of magical rites, cruel sacrifice and wildest superstition, too plainly shows how keenly man has always realized this. For however much we may deplore and repudiate such practices, they can be properly understood only as being the expression of man's slowly developing moral sense—his deep conviction that some wrong has been done to his Universe, his instinctive desire to compensate for this, and his steadily intensified realization that he can never fully achieve that compensation which, nevertheless, he must ever pursue. Nothing short of this mental attitude, at once complex and crude, can explain the foul extremes to which he has gone in this direction; and psychologically these are but the perfectly natural outcome of powerful emotions which dawning rationality is as yet too feeble to restrain and control, just as the far higher reason of civilized mankind repeatedly proves helpless against similar purely emotional outbursts. But just as the biologist discerns the simple forms of life in the lowliest of organisms, so these ancient superstitions must be taken to express the germinating moral sense; while the unrelaxing grasp which all primitive religion exerts on its devotees is ample proof of the intensity of the underlying feelings. Its distortions and excesses are due, therefore, not to the absence nor even the feebleness of moral distinctions—for these, such as they are, are markedly rigid—but rather to its crudeness—to dense ignorance allied with irresistible emotion. It is of course true that the accompanying moral code itself, when isolated from religious practice and regarded simply as a moral code, is of such a low order that we are tempted to describe it as essentially immoral; but this is the case solely from

our own far higher level, so that to condemn *e.g.* infanticide and polygamy as unethical *under the conditions which then prevailed* is as illogical as to call a child stupid because it does not understand advanced algebra, or the average person dull because he cannot grasp the Quantum Theory; or, again, to deny life to a jellyfish because it lacks a brain; any such attitude, in short, simply violates the basal principles of evolution. On the other hand, once we perceive that ethical codes, exactly like nervous systems, may function quite efficiently *under the relevant conditions* at all their differing grades, we can understand that the moral ideals of primitive man were just as onerous and imperative to him, and probably just as distasteful, as those of modern puritans or ascetics to them. This again explains the perplexing fact, so frequently employed as a reproach, that ancient religion concerned itself not primarily with the endeavour to heighten and purify conduct but mainly to propitiate Nature and the gods; for when viewed in the proper light, the matter is sufficiently simple. In his ordinary moods the average person, at every age alike, is more than satisfied with the reigning moral standards; even these are often too severe for him, so that his attitude to any further advance is very much that of a boot-legger to really effective temperance legislation. At the same time this ordinary laxity leaves him defenceless against his periodical fits of repentance in which, very keenly but very confusedly, he comes to realize the vitiation of his personality and—what is much more important in the present connection—his own inability to eradicate this. This is the reason why moral progress, strictly as such, is the result always of the influence of prophets and martyrs combined with the arduous discipline of social experience, while to the priests is left the much easier task of supervising whatever

specific methods of manifesting repentance and offering compensation may have been selected; and because these were accepted as sufficient, whereas—as the prophets clearly saw—they were really wholly inadequate and therefore nothing more than deceptive palliatives, there arose the age-long conflict between prophets and priests; the latter ministering to man's insistent demand for compensation and forgiveness, no matter at what fearful cost these must be obtained, and the former condemning the entire system root and branch, pointing instead to higher standards and purer lives as the sole condition of spiritual well-being and true happiness. And just as their message, despite all the diversities of race and time, was one, so their fate was one—persecution and exile, the cup of hemlock and the cross.¹

3. Only, once more, man himself remains ever powerless to avert his Sisyphean doom—his doubly futile task of adequately meeting the Universe's spiritual demands, which only heighten the more strenuously he pursues them, and of adequately compensating for his continuous failure; and this, again, without reference to his *deliberate* violations of such meagre standards as he practically accepts. It is always possible, of course, to try to evade this difficulty by abating our ideals—by deprecating all "counsels of perfection" and reconciling ourselves, once for all, to our moral weakness; only it must be clearly recognized that such an attitude diametrically conflicts with the standpoint adopted alike in art and knowledge, or even in athletics, while at the same time to cease to

¹ I do not of course wish to describe the situation in too extreme terms by denying that the same person or group may combine the *rôles* of both priest and reformer; but even so their respective functions remain distinct. "Prophet and priest have always feared and hated one another, each blind to the fact that both are ministers of the same spirit" (*Essays Catholic and Critical*, p. 337).

strive onwards is of itself in practice to fall steadily backwards. Spiritually, one may say, man must always contend with a powerful gravitational force which constantly pulls him downwards. Every really great thinker, on the contrary, instinctively selects the most difficult problems to attack, though he well knows that their solution will reveal fresh problems still more obscure, and this inexhaustibly. But to repudiate this purely intellectual "counsel of perfection" is ultimately to condemn both the individual and the race to stagnation; and in his own distinctive way, every artistic genius realizes the same truth and works from the same standpoint, as is perhaps most clearly seen in the progress of modern music and the architectural efforts to meet the problems of American "skyscrapers". If therefore any moral theorist chooses to part company with these men, that must be his own affair; and even so, the past and its ineradicable effects still remain to be reckoned with, as well as such more moderate—and so-called "practical"—ideals as he cares to advocate; and if even these are to be whittled down until they fall within the compass of mankind in general, then we simply exchange a counsel of perfection for a counsel of despair.

So far then as man himself is concerned, he can neither meet those spiritual demands which he realizes as expressing, to himself, the nature of the Universe, nor make adequate compensation for this inability, to say nothing of his intentional violations of such few ideals as he has made his own. I do not mean, of course, that the average person apprehends the situation in any such set terms as these; but neither does he think of the path of a tennis ball as parabolic nor of food as composed of proteins and carbohydrates. But such, after all, is the only accurate way of dealing with the facts; and when even the village

grocer casually refers to vitamins and the schoolboy to frequencies and wave-lengths, it cannot be altogether pedantic to relate man's ethical ideals to their sole ultimate source—the Universe. Nor again must this be interpreted in the impossible sense that any individual is required to pursue ideals so fine that they outrange his power of conception; though it is instructive to remember that, since ignorance of the law is no valid defence, it is implied that every citizen should be acquainted with the whole law. At first sight this position may seem to conflict with that maintained by Bradley in *Ethical Studies*: "a man who does his work in the world is good, notwithstanding his faults". But this is immediately qualified by the further assertion, which is amply sufficient for my own contention, that "we must not say that any man really does fill his station to the full height of his capacity; nor that he cannot perform his function better than he does, for we all can do so, and should try to do so; bad habits cling to and even arise in me"; and Bradley concludes that "my faults, if they do not matter to my station, do not matter to me". But it is perfectly obvious that the "if" here expresses an absolutely impossible proviso, since to deny that every fault inevitably affects the individual's "station" is plainly to deny both the general principle of causality and its main feature—its irreversibility. In fact, Bradley himself explicitly emphasizes this truth; "the false self", he continues, "is constantly subdued but never disappears. And it *never can disappear*."¹ This clearly means that man must realize and carry out the highest possible ends; only, in practice, as these present themselves to his own understanding and bear upon his actual situation. But this principle is in no

¹ *Ethical Studies*, pp. 181, 182, 183, 205; cf. also pp. 203, 231, 232, 242, 322 (second ed.; my italics).

degree unprecedented; for it holds true equally throughout the world of life, in so far as every organism must, in its own specific way, conform to the *entire* system of natural law; only under these conditions can it develop and hold its own in the ruthlessly eliminating advance of evolution. To say that this process is selective is only to say that it operates always causally; while this again means that it operates penally. Every organism without exception, in other words, must contend with, and conform to, the whole physical universe—not merely with its terrestrial environment only, as isolated from the rest of the universe, since any such isolation is plainly impossible. The light and heat of sun and moon, probably even the cosmic rays from the depths of stellar space, and undeniably the past history of the solar system as reflected in recurrent glacial periods, all modify the course of organic evolution;¹ while this, as it attains its higher levels of consciousness and reason, plainly continues itself into the sphere of psychical evolution, wherein man must respond no longer to natural laws alone, but simultaneously to those aesthetic, rational and moral principles which I have called “spiritual”, and which, therefore, again in their specific way express the imperative demands of the Universe in its entirety.

4. The belief that the Universe is in its essence material—that it is ultimately a realm of matter in motion—is now no more than an exploded superstition. Little did its adherents anticipate that matter would give rise to the baffling perplexities of the Quantum Theory, and motion, similarly, to the abstractions of Relativity. Nevertheless it justified the contention that Reality is hostile

¹ “Cosmic radiation is so intense that it breaks up several million atoms in each of our bodies every second. . . . The birth of the solar system resulted from the close approach of two stars” (Sir J. H. Jeans, *Nature*, vol. 121, pp. 468, 469).

to man's ideals and hopes—that (as T. H. Huxley forcibly argued) “social progress means the checking of the cosmic process at every step, and the substitution for it of another which may be called the ethical process”: plainly antithetic to the “cosmic process” and forced to contend with this for every step in its slow advance. What prospects of success Huxley supposed the “ethical process” to enjoy I do not know; but Mr. Bertrand Russell vividly suggests, in “A Free Man’s Worship”, that “the checking of the cosmic process at every step” seems a desperate enterprise foredoomed to failure. But it must now be observed that this holds true equally of every kind of Universe that is in any way an *impersonal* Universe; and in this respect it matters not whether it is infra-personal or ultra-personal—whether, like the world of “matter in motion”, it falls far below the level of selfhood, or, like the transcendent Reality of many Hegelian thinkers, it rises far above that level; “selfhood” and “personality” here, of course, denoting not merely its human type but rather that all-perfect nature which, in my earlier volumes, I have attributed to Deity as the Supreme Self. For both such types of Universe must operate causally or necessarily, as is indeed explicitly maintained by those who advocate them; and again it matters not whether the causation and necessity are physical or psychical, since in both cases alike the process (as I have previously argued) is throughout irreversible;¹ so that once again Sisyphus becomes the prototype of man, and this whether he is mortal or immortal; if the latter indeed, his doom is age-long, like that of Prometheus chained to his eternal rock.

Now there are three ways in which this possibility may be regarded: from the point of view firstly of suffering, secondly of punishment, but thirdly, and much more

¹ Cf. *ante* p. 103 note.

justly, in the light of man's instinctive desire to achieve the actualization of his own noblest ideals. I do not mean, of course, that suffering and punishment are ever negligible aspects; this can be true for only a quite inhuman stoicism. Rather must the former always hold its due place in evolutionary theory, and the latter in ethics and law. But this clearly means that

The soul of man, like unextinguished fire,
Yet burns toward heaven with fierce reproach, and doubt,
And lamentation, and reluctant prayer,
Hurling up insurrection, which might make
Our antique empire insecure, though built
On eldest faith, and Hell's coeval, fear.

As to the "soul of man", nevertheless,

It yet remains supreme o'er misery,
Aspiring, unrepressed.¹

It is here then that we find the essential truth of the whole moral situation—"the soul of man, aspiring, unrepressed"—clearly visible even in the criminal or traitor who vainly seeks to compensate for the irreparable damage he has wrought. For he yearns now, it must be observed, not to escape pain but on the contrary to suffer it—to undergo any punishment whatever, if only this will cancel the past and leave untarnished the 'scutcheon of his race. Unconsciously or instinctively, that is to say, he finally comes to interpret the fatal climax in terms of man's dominating spiritual ideals which, he now realizes, demand an inviolability that he himself can never bestow. He would say, again with Prometheus:

Pour forth the cup of pain . . . I would fain
Be what it is my destiny to be,
The saviour and the strength of suffering man,
Or sink into the original gulf of things.

¹ *Prometheus Unbound*, Act III, Sc. I.

And what we thus find animating the lowest and worst of men breaks brilliantly forth in the hero and martyr; but even there also, quite unavailingly.

This then is true (to repeat) if Reality, in its supreme type, is essentially impersonal; but if the nature of Deity is personal—again using this term in its highest possible sense—the entire situation is profoundly changed. For just as we have found the perfect mechanism of the material universe to be the expression of His perfect knowledge, so what I have called “the ethical nature of Reality” is, at bottom, the expression of His perfect goodness or holiness,¹ but always as a dynamic quality which irresistibly sustains the course of racial and social evolution. Huxley’s absolute antithesis between the “cosmic process” and the “ethical process” thus vanishes completely, and is replaced by that unbroken continuity between the two, the one as a phase or stage of the other, which evolutionary theory logically demands. Neither of these principles, however, in any degree relieves the extremity of the situation so far as man’s violation of the “ethical process” is concerned. For this process, exactly like all the vital and physical processes of Nature, must still remain both causal and absolutely irreversible. Here therefore we must endeavour anew to apply the method of conceiving the divine nature which I have previously employed—that is to discover what further qualities are logically implied in the concept of personality when this is elevated to its highest level, or (to employ a mathematical expression) raised to its highest power; for only thus, as I have repeatedly urged, can even human selfhood be adequately understood.

5. At this point then, our earlier conclusions about the finest types of humanity gain a profound significance.

¹ Cf. my *Nature of Deity*, chap. vii, “Divine Holiness”.

For we found that in all such individuals there reigns an inherent and passionate desire to maintain inviolate their highest ideals, and at the same time to compensate for every defection, not only of their own but equally of others, more especially of those whom they keenly love; while their love often extends far beyond the narrow circle of kin and friends to embrace party or nation, or even all mankind; and this, finally, no matter how undeserving their fellows may actually be. Still further, although the ideals which they espouse are in the first instance *their* ideals, these are gradually realized to be something far more than their own—to be in fact universal ideals in the literal sense that they express the nature of the Universe and reveal its dominating tendency. This is true equally in art, in morals and in religion; so that the greatest literature of the world has both an aesthetic and a moral quality that are plainly distinguishable, but none the less plainly inseparable.¹ That is why the highest art tends to become impersonal in the sense that its creators speak not of and for themselves, but always for something which they feel to be greater than themselves and to be even supreme; thus they are lost in their works in the sense of being absorbed by, or incorporated within, their works, so that these often gain an independence of their own quite apart from their unknown authors. In exactly the same spirit the prophets of every great religion speak not for themselves, but claim to utter some divine command; and however narrow and defective their outlook and message may actually be, still we have found that alike from the standpoint of history, of evolution and of philosophy, their ideals always to some degree reveal “the nature of the Universe” as this must appear to each race and era—as

¹ Cf. *ante* p. 91.

absolute at any given epoch, yet always transcended as man's spiritual evolution proceeds.

Since therefore these principles hold true of the finest types of personality, and since the essential nature of Deity also is personal, it is perfectly logical to apply these principles to His nature; and to say "logical" here is to say "necessary", because what is "logically true" is always "necessarily true", as is most easily seen in the mathematical sciences; only, it must be remembered, not in them alone, but universally—every "logical truth", in other words, is a necessary truth; to say this is indeed really redundant, for every truth, simply as truth, is a "logical truth". The sphere of Logic, however, is usually supposed to be so narrowly restricted that the term "logical truth" has unfortunately acquired an artificial meaning of its own, which is in fact quite illegitimate. Too often "Logic" is that of the immortal Tweedledee: "If it was so, it might be; and if it were so, it would be; but as it isn't, it ain't. That's logic." But we must contrast with all such caricatures the affirmation of Bosanquet: "Logical exactitude in the full and true sense is not a deadening but a vitalizing quality."¹ It must follow, therefore, that every ideal which expresses "the nature of the Universe" also expresses—in its own specific way and degree—the nature of Deity, in the sense that it reveals the dynamic purposes of Deity as manifesting and fulfilling themselves in the entire evolutionary and historic process. This holds true, once again, alike from the intellectual, the aesthetic, and the moral standpoints—the last however, when most adequately interpreted, again being all-inclusive. Hence there emerge two further conclusions of paramount importance.

In the first place, we must conceive of Deity as being

¹ *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, p. 59.

infinitely more intent on maintaining the divine purpose than any genius or reformer can ever be on sustaining the ideals which so imperatively command his allegiance. For we have found this devotion to be *inherent* in all the highest forms of selfhood; it must attain its supreme level therefore in the nature—in the dynamic and active nature—of the Supreme Self. This is in fact the ultimate reason why all such ideals are felt to be both objective and absolute, and also why every violation of them is inevitably, but always naturally and not arbitrarily, penalized. This ultimate reason is in both instances the same—because these ideals have behind them the infinite force and the irrefragable authority of the divine character whose purposes they express. In the realm of Nature, in the usual sense of this term, this is so perfectly obvious that (apart from miracle) any suspension of natural laws, and equally any hope of escaping the penalty of violating those laws, have become inconceivable. But as I have repeatedly insisted, only the narrowness of our vision prevents our seeing that what is patently true of natural laws is equally true of intellectual, aesthetic and moral principles; for these too are (in essence) the higher “laws” of those spheres of Reality which transcend “Nature”; while neither Nature nor any other realm of Being can, in the end, be considered in separation from Deity.¹

¹ It should be obvious that I do not intend to oppose “Nature” to any other mode of real existence, since these are all interconnected and continuous. On the other hand the accepted applications of “Nature”—which are, however, slowly widening—are highly convenient; and from this point of view it is perfectly legitimate for the scientist, as such, to isolate Nature and pursue his investigations without any specific reference to Deity. For in this way he definitely marks out his sphere of enquiry and is the better able to attain his ends; and similarly with the artist. Apart from this consideration Professor Patten’s attitude may be adopted, as expressed in his *Passing of the Phantoms*: “the

Hence it is that all resistance to those ideals which actually express the dynamic tendencies of the Universe is in the long run futile, whatever temporary success it may enjoy and whatever transient pleasure it may yield; while (still further) their every violation quite naturally works out its own inescapable penalty, long deferred and difficult to discern though this often is; finally, the purpose and the ultimate effect of every such penalty are to safeguard and to reinstate, or to reintegrate, the violated ideal—to reassert its authority unimpaired and bring into new play the dynamic tendency that it expresses. This, once again, is most readily perceived in all natural phenomena, particularly perhaps in the "laws of health", but equally in the persistent advance of organic evolution. Pain may thus be compared to the red danger-signal, or to the buoy marking out the only safe channel; in the long run it operates as the impulse which drives back both the individual and the species off the wrong track and directs them to the right one. This corrective function of pain is plainly deeply rooted in the very nature of life itself, both as bodily and as mental; and from this standpoint it must be regarded as an essential aspect of the eliminative process of selection. For if its warnings are persistently disregarded the ultimate result is always extinction—organically, socially and individually. To describe the occurrence of pain, therefore, as merely arbitrary and capricious implies an extraordinarily short-sighted view of the situation. Professor Julian Huxley, *e.g.*, has recently based his rejection of the per-

religious sense tends to heighten the deeper we study the biological sciences. . . . For we are brought into direct communion with God's own works. God and Nature are to us the one great Power" (p. 67). It should be added that Professor Patten rejects "the idea of an anthropomorphic God" (p. 69), so that I do not suggest that he would accept my wider conclusions in any sense,

sonality of Deity upon the prevalence of suffering in the Universe.¹ It must of course be admitted that the penal codes of society are frequently clearly irrational, so that if Nature's methods were of the same futile character Professor Huxley's argument would be quite valid. But that is exactly the crux of the matter—the fact *i.e.* that the better we understand the details of natural selection, the more clearly is pain seen not to be capricious, but on the contrary both causational and corrective. Some biologists would add that the suffering of animals is never so keen as man imagines it to be; and if this is true it would follow that pain is rarely, or indeed never, superfluous. Professor Patten definitely supports this suggestion, and so (I believe) does Professor J. A. Thomson. "A happy existence" (observes the former) "can for the most part be permitted to living creatures in general. A pessimistic or cruel view of Nature's ways appears illogical."² But however this may be, it is obvious that the penal suffering which society inflicts on those who violate its foundational ideals is being directed more and more towards the conservation of those ideals, so that in a perfect criminal code the punishment would, literally, "fit the crime". It must here be observed, however, that such a perfect code can emanate only from a mind of an extremely high order, since it plainly baffles even our ablest and most sympathetic legislators. Once again, therefore, the suggestion that "the criminal code of Nature"—or rather of the Universe—as it may be called, expresses the purpose of a perfect and supreme personality appears to be a quite logical extension of an accepted social principle.

In the light therefore of (1) the inflexibility and uni-

¹ *Religion Without Revelation.*

² *The Passing of the Phantoms*, p. 79.

versal range of natural and moral laws, (2) their rigorously selective mode of operation, and (3) the corrective function of pain, we are justified in concluding that what these features all alike express, in the end, is the divine maintenance of those dominating ideals which characterize all the great spheres of existence—ideals which are, therefore, supremely real. The phrase “great spheres of existence” must not be misunderstood as denoting only some aspects of Reality, while omitting others because they are limited and insignificant. On the contrary, these “great spheres” are all-inclusive, and must be regarded not only on their more familiar scales of magnitude but equally in their minutest details. For every molecule and atom, every germ and living cell, are in this regard equally as eloquent as solar system and stellar galaxy; and this, again, is in complete accord with the finest social ideals—with the discipline of a good army or school from which not the most obscure member can be exempted, and similarly the concern of national law for the conduct of even the lowliest citizens. The essential point is that the foregoing conclusions, in their reference to Deity, are in no sense strained nor illogical, but are simply the natural expansion of ideals which both the social and the individual self, in acting on their highest planes, unreservedly accept and strive to enhance; and in the succeeding chapter these final conclusions will acquire a still greater significance.

VIII

DIVINE REVELATION IN SELFHOOD

1. THE analogies which have already been logically derived from the finest types of human selfhood may now be pursued still further. We have found man to be condemned to "the Sisyphean doom of eternal failure, yet eternal toil"—to the "doubly futile task of adequately meeting the Universe's spiritual demands and of adequately compensating for his continuous failure".¹ We have seen also that the impulse to compensate is inherent in humanity, and therefore most fully expressed in its greatest sons, not only on their own individual behalf, but altruistically—for the sake of others who may be not merely strangers to themselves but even hostile. Finally, we concluded that Deity, as personal, incessantly sustains those ideals whose realization man feels to be imperatively demanded from himself; so that whenever we assert what we regard as our rightful claims upon our fellows, and whenever we appeal to the law to support and enforce these claims, we are simply acting on a small scale as Deity acts on a universal scale: we are presenting certain demands and ideals to others, just as they may do to us, insisting that these are inherently imperative and must therefore be conceded; while any refusal is taken to incur a rightful penalty. Exactly similar is the attitude of a sovereign to his subjects and a general to his troops. There always exists, of course, the difference between the perfect and the imperfect—between the divine and the human; the latter limited, inconsistent and arbitrary, the former universal and completely rational; but we have also seen that the human

¹ *Ante* pp. 155, 158.

ever seeks and attains a closer approximation to the divine.

At this point there emerges the most important feature of our enquiry. Both man and Deity alike, though on vastly different scales, maintain certain imperative ideals; and equally inherent in man is the impulse to compensate for any neglect and violation of such ideals, impossible though it ever remains for him to do this adequately. Now since the desire to compensate becomes keener as selfhood rises in the scale—as it is far more unselfish and persistent in the hero than in the average individual—we are driven to conclude that in Deity, as being the perfect type of selfhood, the determination to effect this compensation on behalf of man, who himself is helpless to do so, must be equally inherent; while (still further) since Deity is supreme, His purpose must be successfully achieved. For the ultimate basis of the heroic self-sacrifice of man on behalf of others, in his determination to atone for their wrong-doing, can be found only in a passionate and consuming love—a love equally of the hero's own ideals and of his fellows, including (to repeat) not only his own kin but his party or nation or all mankind, no matter how alien or hostile they may be; it is therefore a love that is wholly selfless, even while it is the passion of the noblest self—always directed outwardly and objectively upon beings other than itself. Similarly, except that perfection takes the place of imperfection, with Deity—"the divine selflessness manifests itself objectively throughout the entire Universe . . . as the expression, not only of knowledge and power, but still more fundamentally of love".¹

In its bearing upon our present problem therefore, it follows that the divine purpose must be conceived as

¹ *The Nature of Deity*, p. 144.

having a twofold aspect. In the first place, it must effect a complete and final reintegration of the Good; while in so doing, secondly, it must effect an equally adequate compensation for man's violation of that Good. Not to seek to do this would degrade Deity below the level of a parent—indeed of even an animal—who resists the dictates of his affection for his child; while to fail would fatally vitiate the divine supremacy: would imply that evil, in the long run, is more powerful than the Good.

It should be obvious that the fulfilment of such a purpose will be most rigorously conditioned, since it is precisely the drastic rigour of the situation that renders all man's own efforts futile; and its cardinal conditions are (in my opinion) best expressed somewhat as follows. It must be achieved in the sphere of conduct or action, and this (still further) as essentially moral or ethical, since it is solely the moral category that in this connection is "all-inclusive and all-dominating" in personal experience.¹ This means that it must essentially concern the will, because it is in the exercise of will that the entire range of personality always becomes concentrated or focussed; to say this, however, is plainly to equate will to personality, and thus widely to expand its usual meaning which, while quite sufficient for so-called "practical" affairs, is altogether too narrow and artificial. Kant, as is well known, maintained that nothing whatever is good without any qualification except a good will; but this is true only if we regard willing (first) as inseparable from the action to which it leads, and (secondly) as the final stage of expressing the earlier processes of thought and deliberation which every difficult task plainly involves. Thus it is that the will invariably manifests the essence of the whole self;² while to regard it as a faculty

¹ *Ante* p. 122.

² P. 39.

or power occupying a niche of its own is psychologically incorrect, and at the same time makes the Kantian principle seem decidedly false to actual experience.

Conduct therefore is the sole sphere within which the divine purpose, in this its dual character, can be adequately fulfilled; and this (still further) must be conduct or life that is actually and essentially human, since it is with man's weakness and defection that it seeks to deal. No *absolutely* superhuman action, no matter what height of perfection it might attain, could meet the given situation any more *e.g.* than an exposition of the Theory of Relativity by Einstein himself could meet the needs of students ignorant of the requisite technical language in which it must be offered, or the gift of modern scientific apparatus to barbarians, however intelligent, who knew not how to use it. But while the life—for life, at its highest, is but conduct systematized—must be essentially human, we have already seen that no *purely* human efforts can ever adequately compensate for the individual's own shortcoming, much less for the cumulative wrong-doing of the race. This we have found to be within the power only of Deity; whence it follows that the atoning life must be essentially divine at the same moment that it is equally essentially human. In other words, it must necessarily be the life—the action or conduct—of a self which is simultaneously human and divine.

2. From the purely philosophic standpoint, as distinguished from the theological or religious, the first outstanding question is whether the concept of such a dual personality, at once divine and human, is a valid logical concept; or whether, on the contrary, it is a self-contradictory, and therefore illogical and inadmissible concept, in the same sense that a square circle, or a triangular

parallelogram, is self-contradictory. The answer plainly depends on the character attributed to the divine nature as the supreme element in the real Universe. If this supreme element, or if Reality as such, is in any ultimate sense non-personal, then it may quite well be the case that divine attributes cannot cohere with human attributes in one and the same person, any more than squareness and circularity can coexist in one and the same plane figure or one and the same simple idea, since they are mutually and completely exclusive. But if on the other hand, as I have throughout maintained, Deity is essentially personal in the fullest sense of the term, while man's nature is also personal in a far more restricted and imperfect way, then divine and human attributes, no matter how profoundly they may differ, are not mutually exclusive; it is therefore in no degree self-contradictory to assign them to one and the same person. This does not mean, of course, that it is easy thus to conceive them; on the contrary, it is so difficult that no complete comprehension may ever be possible. But this obstacle must not be taken to mean that the idea is logically self-contradictory, any more than the parallel difficulties of mathematical concepts, especially to the non-mathematical mind, involve self-contradiction. In actual fact the precise opposite is true; for it is these mathematical, and in a sense scarcely intelligible, ideas which most accurately reflect the intricate structure of the real world, while the simple and apparently direct conclusions of ordinary consciousness are always inadequate and often seriously misleading. To consider only one instance out of many—neither the age-long belief that the heavens are geocentric, nor the theory of epicyclic orbits, proved to be applicable to the complex phenomena of Astronomy. We must always be on our guard, therefore, against the

ever present tendency to reject suggestions merely on the ground of an apparent unintelligibility; for equally in science as elsewhere it cannot be claimed that the nature of the material universe will be ever exhaustively understood; rather indeed the contrary, if we may judge from the character of recent physical theories which, just as did their famous Copernican forerunner, threaten to revolutionize accepted ideas.¹

If then man and Deity share a common selfhood, there exists between them an essential continuity to which, in other spheres, there are many familiar analogies: between the mind of the lowest animal organisms and of the finest genius, or again between the latter and the potentialities of the unborn babe; between the structure of the atom and of the solar system, paralleled as this probably is in many stellar groups; between even the space included within the atom and the space of the entire physical universe; or to take a much simpler but quite similar instance, between the caterpillar and the exquisite butterfly, endowed with completely new organs and different habits. It must here be remembered that the concept of evolution has habituated the modern mind to the profound contrasts that are actually involved here, so that these have now become subordinated to the underlying continuity; and if it still remains difficult to expand this accepted viewpoint so as to include Deity with man, the reason is that the vastly greater contrast tends to exclude continuity so completely that the situation is envisaged from the severely restricted standpoint of the uneducated mind, which can perceive no connection whatever between *e.g.* atomic and stellar structure. Different though the two spheres of enquiry plainly are, in both cases alike the basal principle remains

¹ Cf. note p. 123 *ante*.

one and the same—the principle of unimpaired continuity, of a common nature manifesting itself at two far removed levels and, for that reason, in widely different ways.¹

This consideration bears upon another difficulty involved in the heliocentric scheme of the universe—that is the triviality of the space-time scale of human existence as contrasted with the dimensions of the universe in its entirety. For it is often objected, and still more frequently felt, that the faults and follies of mankind are altogether too unimportant to merit divine concern. But I have already protested against accepting such spatio-temporal standards as final, and pointed out that they are implicitly rejected as aesthetic criteria—"in actual practice time and space rarely enter into value judgments at all".² A legal system which does not defend the rights of even the poorest and most obscure citizen is unanimously condemned as inadequate; so that it is perhaps not too crude an illustration to compare the divine attitude towards man to that of a sovereign who is more interested in slum conditions than his own palace, or of a general who, like the Arabian Nights ruler, visits the solitary sentinel in his distant outpost and is just as careful over the details of the commissariat as of his staff arrangements. It is a sufficiently familiar truth that no detail whatever is too trivial for genius to attend to if it affects the final result; on the contrary, genius consists largely in the power to perceive and coordinate details that escape the purblind vision of the average mind. All these commonplace analogies are fully borne out by the scientist's discovery of complex order in every crystal and atom, combined as this is with an exquisite, though concealed and at first sight purposeless, beauty. Such

¹ Cf. p. 78 *ante* on paedomorphism.

² *Ante* p. 113.

phenomena, I believe, find their ultimate explanation only in the creative activity of a Supreme Self, actuated by a love akin to that of every genius for his own work; a love, still further, which is in its moral aspects intensified rather than destroyed by the unworthiness of its object, precisely as many parents devote all their care to the worst of their children rather than the best. I fully admit that our closest parallels must in this connection appear trivial. But equally trivial, on the surface, were the phenomena that led to the discovery of radium and the inert atmospheric gases, the exact velocity of light, the constitution of the stars and the speed and direction of their movements. The full and final significance of things must therefore never be judged from their superficial unimportance; the objections based on "the triviality of the space-time scale of human existence" may thus not merely be disregarded but may be converted into a positively favourable argument. For suppose a man were to explore a large and well-kept estate and suddenly find, in some desolate and neglected rubbish patch, diamonds of great beauty and value; might he not conclude that elsewhere something of still greater value would exist? If then we choose to regard the earth as an unimportant corner of the vast Universe, still it has produced the diamonds of Dante and Shakespeare, Plato and Newton, Beethoven and Lincoln, to say nothing of all the forgotten heroisms of man's long history. May not these also be eloquent of higher values elsewhere? ¹

3. Summarizing the foregoing argument, we find that neither the maintenance of inviolable moral ideals, nor

¹ I may refer to the extremely interesting suggestions advanced by Sir Francis Younghusband in his *Life in the Stars*; cf. *ante* pp. 120, 121.

any adequate compensation for their infraction, can be attained by man himself, despite those passionate endeavours which sustain his religious development. Only Deity can achieve these ends;¹ and the desire to do this is inherent in the divine personality, exactly as it is in the finest types of mankind. Deity likewise enjoys the power necessary to fulfil that inherent desire, while at the same time its fulfilment must be most rigorously conditioned. For it must take the form of an act which is fundamentally moral, in that sense of the term which makes it "all-inclusive and all-dominating": the form, therefore, of a personal life which is simultaneously fully divine and fully human: divine in order successfully to achieve its transcendent aim, and human in order to meet the drastic and imperative demands of the situation upon man himself; divine, again, as constituting the most complete and most direct revelation of Deity, yet human in order that man may adequately apprehend it; a life, still further, that is perfect from the ethical standpoint even while from any lower but non-ethical standpoint it must appear as an utter failure. In more strictly philosophical terms, it must be a life, and so an act, which both vindicates and reintegrates the Good in such a final and sufficient manner that no further action is necessary, except in the sense of being a continuance of the absolute act itself and (therefore) on the same ethical plane; while such a vindication of the Good effected by Deity plainly renders it supreme as against every form of evil; evil, as such, being always more than something merely negative—being rather positive resistance to the Good.

¹ In its formal aspect this principle can be extended to all super-human, but still finite, forms of selfhood; but this has little bearing on the practical issues.

These, I believe, form the essential features of the situation; but it is so many-sided that a number of subordinate aspects demand consideration. To depict the Good in philosophic terms, unfortunately, tends to distort its whole nature by endowing it with that unruffled serenity which is popularly supposed to lighten the philosopher's own tasks; and so the Good takes on the form of a stained-glass window saint, haloed in eternal immobility. But even pure thought is sometimes strenuous; and the Good is always so, despite the calm which occasionally descends on the warring self; for it is the calm of self-conquest and unrelaxing self-control—the poise of the hovering eagle in the fierce currents of the upper air. To sever the Good from the self is fatal, even though it may be necessary to distinguish between them for the sake of discussion. For goodness is essentially dynamic; and since evil is also dynamic, it plainly follows that the highest Good is created—or rather creates itself—in and through the overcoming and destruction of the grossest evil. Even the narrow experience of the average individual is sufficient proof of this; and while every phase of opposition to evil is in its own way good, no matter how unconscious and simple it may be, still the highest conceivable Good is that of a Being which is fully conscious of itself, of its purposes and of all that tends to obstruct those purposes. But this again constitutes the essence of selfhood, and in its highest conceivable form, of divine selfhood.¹ Similarly, to regard the Good as somehow abstract is a parallel error; Good and evil are just as concrete as force and energy, simply because they are the supreme types of energy; although physical forces themselves must of course be treated as abstract in all mathematical calcula-

¹ Cf. note p. 26 *ante*.

tion.¹ Goodness, therefore, undeniably brings with it a serenity of its own, which is however inseparably allied with stern and constant struggle that is none the less a struggle because ultimate triumph is assured. Obviously there is nothing whatever unusual about this; it is only the spirit of a good sportsman engaged in a keen and critical game, who clearly sees that victory is certain provided only that he does his best, or of an able general in a fierce battle, transferred to the wider arena of conduct and life and to the higher sphere of ethics.

Even if we choose to exclude the specifically ethical aspects of the problem it still remains true, as I have previously argued with reference to genius, that the fullest revelation of any individual consists in his revelation of himself, *as a person*, to his intimate friends.² For intellectual and artistic brilliance often conceals a man's true personality because it tends to sever him from his fellows, and so to distort their estimate of him; his great abilities, therefore, are no more than aspects of his complete selfhood which may conflict to some extent with other aspects, so that to consider them alone is to falsify his actual character. It is true that anyone who could properly appreciate all these diverse aspects alike and together would thereby gain an almost exhaustive insight into his personality—"almost", because some modicum possibly remains ever concealed; but such insight is very rarely obtained. The same principle, however, holds true of the revelation of Deity. I have already discussed those forms of His manifestation which the

¹ It should be obvious, however, that this is only an unavoidable methodological device, which unduly simplifies the real situation by omitting extremely important factors, exactly as an accountant must do in dealing with commercial transactions. There is a marked and unfortunate tendency to forget this in much current scientific discussion.

² Pp. 71, 93 *ante*.

human mind can discern in the structure and beauty of the physical universe, and again in the "ethical character of Reality". But, exactly as in the case of a Shakespeare or a Dante, even these leave much concealed that can be known only when revealed in a personality which is simultaneously human and divine—human (to repeat) in order to be adequately comprehended and responded to by man himself; divine in order to be sufficiently complete.

The objection is familiar that this necessitates a drastic limitation of the divine nature, and even of the divine selfhood; and such limitation, it is further argued, must involve a fatal weakness in that nature. Rather, I think, is the contrary true. For instances of such marked restrictions of personality are comparatively common in ordinary experience. A barrister *e.g.* must simplify the terms of his examination of a stupid witness, and a judge his summing up to an ordinary jury; quite similarly, every teacher must lower himself to the level of his pupils and every parent to that of his infant child. This is obvious enough; but two further points, generally totally ignored, demand equal consideration. The first is that the impulse to do this is inherent in every sympathetic—*i.e.* in every good—nature, so that to stifle it involves either snobbery or cruelty; while, still further, far from being any evidence of weakness, it always demands on the contrary exceptional ability and strength of character. For obviously only a skilful barrister can properly handle dull witnesses, and only an experienced judge can clarify all the issues of a complicated action so that the non-legal mind can arrive at a verdict. It is indeed often far easier to present one's case to experts than to untrained intellects; the latter task is almost always onerous and demands therefore a peculiar ability

which not every cultured individual enjoys. If to all this we add the self-sacrifice that is often demanded—the abandonment of one's own happiness in order to gain close touch with those far below one's own level, or outside one's own circle of interests—then the parallel limitation of the divine nature which incarnation necessitates must be regarded as significant, not of its weakness, but rather of its perfection. For it achieves the twofold end of the completest possible revelation of Deity on the one hand, as subjected (on the other) to the condition of its being comprehensible by the mind and spirit of man, and this no matter how intensely vitiated these may have become through his pursuit of evil; while the more we insist on human ignorance and wickedness, the more strenuous and drastic do we thereby make the consequent limitations imposed on incarnate Deity, and (conversely) the power and love which alone can assume and sustain these limitations. It is as though we were to request Einstein to expound, fully and clearly, his Relativity Theory to persons ignorant of physics and mathematics. Such a task would plainly be extremely difficult if not altogether impossible, simply because there could arise no intellectual reciprocity—no reception of what was being imparted. But what is thus patent so far as knowledge is concerned is true throughout all human experience. Contact between selves, or communion between persons, always demands responsiveness; or, in other words, "revelation must be a matter of responsive comprehension";¹ and this can be most fully effected and maintained only between personalities which are very much on the same level, so that all initial contrasts and barriers must be counterbalanced by some such limitation, always deliberately imposed upon itself by

¹ Pp. 20, 72 *ante*.

the higher type, as occurs in the legal instances just referred to.

But from this it must follow, still further, that none of the "numinous" or absolutely transcendent attributes of Deity can, under any conditions whatever, become revealed in and through human selfhood; or in converse terms, it follows that if the *essential* divine attributes are numinous or absolutely transcendent, then they must all be necessarily excluded from incarnation. This conclusion has an obvious twofold aspect: (1) from the side of Deity it renders impossible any incarnation that is substantial and more than merely formal; while (2) from the side of humanity it renders all full and intimate communion equally impossible; and the further implications of this result in their bearing upon religious experience are sufficiently patent.

4. So far then as humanity is concerned, the completest possible self-revelation of Deity could be effected only through an incarnation conditioned as I have just suggested. The qualification with regard to humanity is plainly all-important, since it strictly defines the limits of our enquiry, which must deal not with any divine revelation to beings other than, or higher than, man, but to man primarily as a moral being who can never satisfy the categorical imperatives of his own moral nature; or in more exact terms, the demands of his nature as this is conditioned by "the ethical character of Reality". That such a revelation cannot be absolutely exhaustive may be conceded, provided however that it is exhaustive in its relation to the human spirit—that it contains all that such a spirit can ever apprehend; for it is obvious that by no finite being, of however exalted an order, can the infinite be exhaustively known. I shall therefore use the term "incarnation" in its philosophic,

rather than in any specifically theological, sense, without implying of course any essential conflict between the two.

From this standpoint, then, the foregoing conclusions appear to me to demand a further expansion. For we have found that the revelation of Deity by means of an incarnation is not only quite logically conceivable, but is also logically demanded by the divine nature itself. I mean that just as the impulse towards the fullest possible degree of intercourse with his intimate friends, and above all with his own kin, is inherent in man, so this impulse finds its satisfaction to the utmost extent of the individual's power, limited though this always is to some degree. In simpler terms, because the impulse is inherent it must seek to actualize itself so far as the governing conditions permit; so that not to do this is to stultify the very essence of selfhood. We find, accordingly, that the completest modes of self-revelation invariably occur in the highest types of humanity—in every type of genius, intellectual and aesthetic, ethical and religious—to whom, every one in his distinctive way, self-revelation is as inevitable and necessary as for the sun to shine. What is in principle the same impulse or desire (as we have already seen) animates in the most intense degree the divine nature, whose power, still further, is unlimited. It follows therefore that incarnation, as the highest mode of the revelation of Deity, must be not only conceivable, and not only possible, but must also become actual—must take its due place in the historical order of events; and this (to repeat) as a limitation of the divine nature which is proof not of its weakness, but on the contrary of its infinite power.

The issue becomes therefore not only philosophical but, equally, historic; and from the latter viewpoint, it appears to my own mind that the personality of Jesus

constitutes such an incarnation as we have just found to be logically demanded. It fulfils all the rigorous conditions necessitated by the completest possible revelation of Deity to mankind—the revelation, that is to say, in and through selfhood to other selves, and this essentially on the ethical plane and in the moral sphere. But since, as I have maintained throughout, there are differing modes and degrees of divine revelation, it follows that so far as possible these should all be associated together and interpreted in the light of each other. This however is frequently impossible; but even when the intelligence is too feeble to grasp the rational order of the universe, or the feelings too dull to appreciate its beauty, it always remains possible, so long as humanity has not been quite obliterated, to respond to some of the infinitely diverse aspects under which the “ethical character of Reality” presents itself within human experience, alike that of the savage and of the mystic. So long as this fundamental response is inadequate, neither intellectual nor artistic development can compensate for the lack. Only while the moral tone remains healthy, as History has repeatedly proved, can knowledge and art retain their finest forms for any lengthy periods. The reason for this is the same as before—the fact, that is, that moral experience is “all-inclusive and all-dominating”, so that every aesthetic or intellectual defect which becomes sufficiently pronounced thereby becomes a serious moral defect also; and from this arise all those features of man’s ethical and religious development which have already been considered.

It cannot therefore be objected that the personality of Jesus forms a defective revelation of the divine character, because He lacked genius in the spheres of knowledge and art. For I have previously observed that such genius tends to isolate its possessors from the generality of man-

kind; and it is perfectly obvious that anyone who, in His own day, regarded the universe from the standpoint of modern science would have been as absurdly out of place and as practically ineffective as Darwin or Einstein would be in the heart of savage Africa; where, again, in this respect, is the time-limit to be fixed? In other words, why should "modern" knowledge, whether of to-day or of the past few centuries, be all that is demanded? If any such test is to be applied, it is only logical to require, not the science merely of to-day, but rather that of the far remote future—in a word, absolutely complete knowledge. But this would clearly make its possessor quite unintelligible not only to his contemporaries of the first century, but to even the most "liberal" and enlightened exponents of current free-thought; while the same considerations plainly apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to artistic brilliance. In neither of these two respects can any upper "modern" limit be selected which is anything more than a merely conventional or arbitrary criterion determined by each individual critic's own attainments; so that to transcend this, as is logically demanded by the standard of perfection, would be to transcend the receptive capacity of mankind for at least several millennia.

In the sphere of knowledge and art, therefore, it is clear that man is best able to bring about his own spiritual advance. For no matter how serious his difficulties at any given stage may be, it always lies within his own power, to a marked degree, to overcome them even though perfection can never be achieved, provided that he exerts the requisite effort; while since this ideal naturally accords with his strongest desires and finest emotions, he is never loth to do this, if only by proxy at the hands of genius. But throughout the realm of moral experience, on the contrary, the conditions are of an

almost completely contradictory character. In the first place, many of the keenest emotions and desires are no longer in accord with the tendency towards moral perfection; rather do they combine to retard and defeat it. Powerful ambitions and appetites, animal pleasures and instincts—these and their ingrained allies all enjoy a prerogative which can justly demand some measure of natural satisfaction; so that the very egoism which finds a certain legitimate place in intellectual and artistic achievements itself becomes an almost fatal obstacle to moral development. Secondly, it is the inherent character of these defective elements in human nature, whether we account for them by evolution or otherwise, that renders humanity incapable equally of satisfying the categorical imperatives of the Universe, and of adequately compensating for this failure. Man is therefore as helpless as a swimmer struggling in midocean, who cannot save himself by his own purely unaided efforts however strenuously he exerts himself; and to whom, again, the clearest scientific exposition of the art of swimming and the most entrancing eulogy of the beauty of the sea would be worse than useless.¹ Not until his rescue, which he cannot himself bring about, has been ensured can art and knowledge be of any permanent and absolute value. A sufficiently impressive instance of this is afforded by Dante Rossetti; for as Evelyn Waugh observes in his illuminating study, “only the guilt remained. He started on a new life, bravely enough, but with a part of his soul dead and festering within him”.² “Dead and festering”, let us note; surely no weightier, and at the same time no sadder and darker, proof of my previous contention could be desired, that the principle “art for art’s sake” is all too easily perverted. It reminds us that no man, not

¹ Cf. p. 141 *ante*.

² Rossetti, p. 112.

even the finest genius, can ever be absolutely pure artist, nor for that matter absolutely pure intellect; on the contrary, to be human means to be foundationally and inherently ethical. Finally, a life and personality that are perfect from the moral point of view, however defective they may be from other standpoints, are precisely what make the most direct and trenchant appeal alike to the noblest and the basest of mankind. Instead therefore of isolating the individual from the generality of men, as other types of genius inevitably tend to do, they unite him with many of his fellows, provided they are animated by that love which is one of the highest attributes equally of man and of Deity, and without which perfection of character is altogether impossible.

5. The historical evidence at our command then—and the issue, being in great part a historical issue, is substantially a question of evidence—is in my own opinion amply sufficient to justify the conclusion that the personality of Jesus, when regarded in the light of those moral criteria of the highest order which constitute the only logical viewpoint, is both fully human and fully divine, and forms therefore the most complete revelation of Deity possible under the rigorous conditions of incarnation. These conditions however, as I have already suggested, must not be interpreted as limits in the derogatory sense of *preventing* what is essential being performed, but rather of positively *enabling* this to be effected. For although conditions are often hostile, they are of course not invariably so; the conditions governing *e.g.* wireless communication or a successful surgical operation, or social betterment, far from hampering such ends, are precisely what enable them to be achieved. Quite similarly, incarnation demands what is undeniably a limitation of the divine nature; but it is, equally and necessarily, the

sole means of realizing the fullest possible revelation of that nature to the spirit of man.

To discuss all the details of the purely historical aspects of the subject, however, lies outside my own province and would in any case involve too great a digression; I shall therefore refer to only a few of the most essential points. In the first place, it seems quite impossible to regard the existence of Jesus as wholly, or even mainly, mythical in the sense that the records are only the outcome of subsequent exaggeration of an actual character which in itself possessed little that was extraordinary; and whether such exaggeration was deliberate or not is here a quite subordinate issue. For while myths of this kind are far from uncommon, their content is of a kind radically different from the recorded life of Jesus. This contrast is best expressed, perhaps, by saying that the persons therein depicted are in various ways superhuman to such a degree that they become positively inhuman; so that the final effect is something which is felt to be neither possible nor desirable, no matter how marvellous it may be. On the contrary, it is precisely in this crucial respect that Jesus strikingly resembles another great man whose life shares very much in common with His own—that is Socrates. The essential point is that in both cases alike we feel that we are confronted by a personality thoroughly and characteristically human, even to the inclusion—if this point is pressed—of weaknesses that are typically human; this remains true whether the miraculous element is included or not. In both men, still further, there is the absence of all immediate personal records which leaves us dependent on the indirect impressions of others; and with this is connected their common method of intimately associating with those nobodies who make up

everybody, and of finding ample material for their profound teaching in the trivial happenings of everyday life. Finally and most impressively, both deliberately accepted martyrdom rather than betray their own principles. So far then as the actual evidence at our disposal is concerned, a historian may quite justifiably argue that there exists much less "proof", in any narrowly logical sense of this term, of the actual existence of Socrates than of Jesus; or conversely, that if Jesus is mythical, then Socrates must be still more mythical.

But if, on the other hand, the mythic alternative is chosen, there arise difficulties much more serious than those which attend the historic narrative. For it has then to be explained how various, and to some degree conflicting, stories that were not merely grossly exaggerated, but were absolutely false, and which attributed to their subject claims that were blasphemous and powers almost divine, rapidly and steadily gained for their mythical personage an influence that far surpasses the influence of Socrates even when this is allied with that of his greater successor Plato; and acquired such an influence, further, first over many of His own countrymen whose most deeply rooted religious convictions He had shocked, and afterwards over a civilization that was not merely alien in its spiritual ideals but became actively hostile to His adherents in an almost unparalleled degree. To attribute such an outstanding historic change to Christianity itself is, plainly, an absurd *petitio principii*; since it was precisely the influence of the supposedly mythical Jesus which brought Christianity into existence and triumphantly sustained it under drastic persecution. For it may be pointed out, incidentally, that Christianity is the religion, not of Jesus Himself, but of His followers; what the actual nature of His own religious experience

was can at best be only dimly surmised, since it must obviously have been of an absolutely unique order. If therefore His recorded life is predominantly mythical, then the founding of what is, with whatever defects it may contain, the highest type of religion hitherto developed, must be assigned to a handful of obscure fishermen and ignorant artisans dogged by the unrelenting hostility of even their own nation; and this is clearly on a par with asserting that the French Revolution was effected by a similar group of Parisian workmen who had been hounded out of Paris itself with a price on their heads to meet their doom, in many instances, by being guillotined.

But at this point such suggestions become so patently absurd that they pass, so far as history is concerned, altogether beyond the bounds of serious discussion. Nevertheless they raise equally fatal difficulties in the sphere of aesthetics. For once again omitting, if we choose—since it makes no difference whatever to the result—the aspect of the miraculous, the recorded life and personality of Jesus form a drama of the highest purely artistic merit; a drama which has acquired a popularity and interest with every possible type of mind, whether cultured or simple, approached only by the dramas of Shakespeare. The same thing is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of Socrates—he also, if he is to be regarded as only mythical, is a marvellous dramatic creation. There are of course many other myths which do not, however, reach the same level of supreme artistic perfection; and in this connection the essential point is that no other individual, whose life and character have thus been treated, has attained anything but a transient and negligible influence on the course of history. In other words, they have all alike been *either* actually historic,

but in that case of only slight practical importance: *or* admittedly fictitious, and so possessing nothing more than purely dramatic value. Socrates *e.g.* has been profoundly influential, but no serious historian maintains that, as depicted, he is unhistorical; and this is equally true of Confucius, Gautama and Mohammed. It necessarily follows, therefore, that in this crucial respect Jesus is absolutely unique, since if He is merely mythical He has at the same time acquired a world-wide influence that is as yet very far from being exhausted. We thus become faced with the fatal dilemma that a mythical, but dramatic, character of a rare aesthetic order, has gained this influence, and thus stands wholly apart from every other artistic creation of the same kind. This conclusion appears to myself to violate every canon of the drama; but clearly the only alternative that remains is that if Jesus is not the creation of the artistic imagination, then He undoubtedly existed mainly, if not entirely, as the records show.

But the "Jesus myth" hypothesis defies the inviolable canons of art in two further and equally vital respects. For while (in the first place) the characters created by every great dramatist are infinitely various, the creative genius itself remains in each specific instance single and individual, stamping its own indelible mark on all its multitudinous products alike. Here therefore we always find unity of aesthetic source or origin combined with diversity of imaginative results; now this makes it quite impossible to conceive of two—or more—authors, even if they make use of each other's manuscripts, depicting one and the same great figure in such a manner that the final delineations enjoy an indestructible aesthetic harmony. In other words, we cannot conceive Shakespeare and another fine dramatist both presenting

Hamlet, or Macbeth or Othello, in unique and distinctive ways which would nevertheless fuse into one indissoluble harmony; nor again Thackeray and Dickens so dealing with Micawber and Mrs. Nickleby. On the contrary, whenever two great writers have dealt with the same theme, there have invariably been unmistakable contrasts equally in the manner and the merit of their work. But if Jesus is merely mythical or dramatic, it is the very reverse of all this that has occurred. So far as the familiar records are concerned, instead of the fundamental unity of aesthetic source allied with diversity of imaginative creations, we find on the contrary a marked diversity of origin combined with a final and indestructible unity of production; and this, still further, not with only two, but with at least four, authors not one of whom (finally) ever made any claim whatever to artistic gifts and eminence nor even left behind any other equally remarkable writings. For however much they may share in common, and however much they may conflict in details, the separate records are as unmistakably individual and independent as are Green's and Gardner's *Histories*; there is therefore an undeniable diversity of origin. Yet in spite of this, we have an absolutely unique event in the realm of art, since the common character they have thus independently created is single—individual—harmonious—and above all "real", in the dramatic sense, to a degree that no other character has anywhere approached, with the single exception of the universally accepted historical Socrates. Such an exception ceases to be an exception and becomes a sheer contradiction; so that the sole logical alternative is that the recorded life of Jesus, powerfully dramatic though it undeniably is, is still no mere drama but actual history.

But even if, in order to rescue the myth hypothesis

from destruction, we admit that the impossible has really happened—that is if, in other terms, we accept an aesthetic miracle—then further insuperable difficulties must be faced. For great dramatic triumphs are always the outcome of purely artistic inspiration. Their authors, that is to say, always obey the dramatic impulse—always have the dramatic ideal in view and no other; so that even when they make use of historical material, or when they unconsciously proclaim some profound truth, it is still the purely dramatic purpose that predominates, subordinating all else to itself. Now the “Jesus myth”, as we have found, is not only a myth, but also a drama of an exceptionally high order, readily lending itself to reproduction in profoundly impressive passion plays. Nevertheless the indispensable dramatic instinct and purpose, universally present elsewhere, are in this solitary instance totally absent; so that not only have the authors cooperated to produce a unitary work of art in a manner that is quite unique, but they have at the same time done this in obedience to a non-aesthetic—if not in fact an anti-aesthetic—impulse. For it is obvious that, whether they were recording historical events or not, their sole purpose was a purely religious purpose of an unusually strenuous and propagandist type. Thus the dramatic canons are violated in a further fundamental respect, so that we have now to deal with an aesthetic miracle of a twofold order. There may be, of course, critical intellects capable of accommodating themselves to such an alternative; only in so doing they appear to me to place themselves so far outside the pale of reason that all further argument becomes gratuitous.

In the concluding chapter therefore I shall consider some of the outstanding ethical aspects of the life of Jesus.

IX

THE SUPREME REVELATION OF DEITY

1. To sever religion from morals is to eviscerate it; and to whatever heights religious experience may rise—however pure and elevated it may become—it must always retain an essential and far-reaching contact with the moral aspects of life. But this truth, which every religious genius has abundantly emphasized, can be properly understood only when it is added that whenever morality is severed from personality it also becomes eviscerated. Now this is precisely what occurs when the word “moral” is given that usual narrow meaning which I have previously criticized¹—when it is restricted to “conduct” in some specific sense which steadily becomes more and more artificial, thus depriving the term of that “all-inclusive and all-dominating” significance which is its due right. On the other hand, as soon as it is realized that conduct is always an expression, in one form or another, of the individual personality, which is often betrayed—and so most openly revealed—by minor faults of conduct, it becomes clear that morality and personality, precisely like will and personality,² are to a very high degree one and the same. This is the reason why every good act ennobles, while every evil act vitiates, the self which performs them; for all deliberate action emanates from will; and will, once again, is essentially that inner or subjective activity of the self which must precede its objective and visible activity. To cease to will therefore is not only to cease to act, but still further to cease to be a person, so that all that remains is a chattel or a slave—whether to another person, or to the

¹ P. 87.

² P. 39.

state, or to one's own passions and appetites makes no difference in principle; for even the most ingrained and irresistible habits frequently begin by being deliberate.¹

Conduct and morality are therefore inseparable from selfhood; man's life and personality, in other words, are essentially one. But it is a further plain fact of experience to which I have repeatedly referred, that the vitiation of personality is relatively easy, while the progressive elevation and purifying of selfhood are much more difficult; and all the more difficult, still further, the more firmly vitiation has set in, until finally there remain only

Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed

—as one who, in his own day, earned the reputation of atheism has vividly expressed the situation. This does not mean, of course, that any given person can readily harbour any given kind of evil thoughts and purposes and readily carry these out in appropriate actions. For many, on the contrary, it is almost impossible to steal or to lie; nevertheless everyone possesses some tendencies or other which strongly impel him towards the degradation, rather than the elevation, of selfhood; and from this the familiar truth follows that the noblest self is always created in and through the unceasing struggle with its own specific evils, just as the highest Good emerges from the conquest of evil and never otherwise.

It is then only in the light of this principle that the uniquely complex personality of Jesus can be adequately appreciated. To describe that personality as fully human means that it comprised elements which, had they actually operated, would have degraded it; only, He

¹ Inheritance of course often involves a transmitted taint, for which the individual himself cannot be held morally responsible; but this plainly only transfers, without destroying, the initial responsibility.

never permitted them to do this. Precisely what those elements were it is, I think, quite impossible to say; for they must have been peculiar to Himself, in the sense that every outstanding individual has to encounter moral obstacles which, though of one general type with those of all men, differ radically in their intimate detail. This is plainly wholly in accordance with the uniqueness of His religious experience to which I have previously alluded; it may in fact be interpreted as the converse of that experience. The temptations to utilize unworthy means to attain His high purposes; to employ with a deceptive and audacious self-confidence the unusual spiritual powers which He gradually realized that He possessed; to sever these from their ultimate source in Deity; to feel impatient with His narrow-minded followers and to retaliate for the persecution of His enemies; finally, as in the case of Socrates, to save His own life by abandoning His self-chosen mission—to accept an ignoble compromise rather than an agonizing fate—all these at least stand out clearly from the records compiled by those who, at best, never gained more than a very obscure insight into His full and real character. Yet in spite of this severe limitation, their delineation forms a dramatic triumph of the finest order; for not only did they succeed in depicting a personality completely human, to such a degree that many christians have felt convinced that it was not actually divine, but in depicting a personality which is at the same time morally perfect. And this, it is vitally important to observe, they did in a manner most truly artistic—that is indirectly and by suggestion, not by those plain and reiterated statements of the bare fact which would have seemed most forcible and natural to ordinary non-artistic writers. This really extraordinary literary achievement can perhaps be best

appreciated by being compared with Milton's Satan, or with Macbeth or Iago. For in these classic instances likewise we have indirect or suggestive—and therefore essentially aesthetic—characterization, instead of that blunter and cruder description which is the utmost third-rate novelists can ever attain. It would undeniably be much simpler for both the poet and his readers if we were plainly informed that Iago and Satan were atrociously evil, or Hamlet vacillating, exactly as a capable journalist clearly emphasizes the qualities of criminals or heroes; but it would be incomparably less artistic, and therefore in the end less effective; and this, of course, is why all such imaginative creations are much more "real" than many historic personages. In precisely the same superb manner, then, that Shakespeare and Milton and Dante have delineated evil that is all but absolute, the biographers of Jesus have achieved a far more difficult feat in the sphere of goodness. For it is exactly in this highest sphere of all that the supreme art of even Dante and Milton begins to fail, since their good characters are, aesthetically, unquestionably less vivid and impressive than their wicked. Yet the task which baffled them, although they had ever before their minds the ideal which they strove to reproduce, was successfully accomplished by the non-dramatic group of strikingly contrasted writers of the first century; and this, it must now be observed, wholly against the weight of their own powerful ethical and religious traditions. For the Jew undoubtedly appreciated the moral issues of life far more keenly than any other ancient people; his monotheism was fundamentally ethical rather than theoretical or poetic, as was that *e.g.* of many Greek thinkers; so that its main burden gradually became the futility of every endeavour either to overcome the inherent weakness of

human nature or to make any adequate compensation therefor. This conviction was of course intuitive and instinctive rather than rational, although we have found it to be in complete accordance with the causational principle. But it had become so ingrained in the racial temperament as to preclude, from the outset, any successful attempt to depict in intimate and delicate detail—that is as contrasted with pure imagination and as a confessedly unattainable ideal—a morally perfect individual whose self-consciousness betrayed no trace whatever of what to every Jew was second nature—that is the sense of personal evil and its consequent responsibility; and all this again without introducing that natural counterbalance of self-deception or hypocrisy which would, in the end, have forfeited whatever influence blind enthusiasm might originally have secured. Taken together with all the earlier considerations already outlined, this appears to me still more definitely to rule out the suggestion that the figure thus depicted was mythical rather than historic.

2. The term “morally perfect” must however be carefully guarded against misunderstanding. I have already maintained that, far from excluding, it is on the contrary essentially compatible with powerful tendencies or incitements to evil which, however refined rather than gross they may be—such as *e.g.* pharasaism or exaggerated asceticism—would none the less be evil; for these characteristics are themselves plain indications of an underlying sense, no matter how subconscious it may be, of moral delinquency. Moral perfection must consist therefore never in the mere *absence* of such tendencies, but rather in their dynamic activity followed by their invariable defeat; and here again we must distinguish between what is positively evil, in the sense of

being deliberate or volitional, on the one hand, and (on the other) temperamental traits which we ourselves should omit were we to attempt to portray an ideal character. Only we should thus attain not an actual man; rather at best an animated plaster saint decked with halo and every other conventional emblem of holiness; and this is precisely what we do *not* find in the recorded life of Jesus. Instead of all this facile superficiality, we have a man frankly contemptuous of every type of moral and religious pretence, indifferent to asceticism purely in itself, regardless of many deeply rooted national and religious conventions, defiantly transcending the moral and religious principles of all the greatest leaders of His own race, sacrosanct though these had become, sometimes openly impatient with His followers, passionately denouncing wrong, yet never explicitly condemning slavery and similar evils which civilization, actuated in the main by His ideals, has categorically repudiated. His knowledge and entire mental outlook, again, were essentially those of His own day, so that He was as blissfully ignorant of the Copernican Theory as of the Quantum Theory. Whether all this must be taken to detract from moral perfection depends, obviously, on what we suppose this term to mean. I should myself insist that it means moral, and not be confused with either aesthetic or intellectual perfection, as so frequently seems to have been done; while it is almost superfluous to add that any *quasi*-Nietzschean description of the man who immovably faced the Roman governors and the Jewish priests, as a weakling, is too infantile for discussion. Nietzsche, apparently, was unable to recognize any superman other than the febrile offspring of his own distorted imagination, and grotesquely failed to distinguish between moral humility and moral feebleness. In all essentially *non*-moral respects, in fact,

Jesus was a man of His own age and even of His own race. But surely this is the ideal form of any actual incarnation—that is of the manifestation of the divine nature in and through an actual person, instead of some wholly impossible being belonging to no real age nor clime. It is also true, of course, that the moral perfection of Jesus was sustained by a religious consciousness which far transcends that of every other leader of mankind—by an unclouded spiritual vision, and a direct and intimate communion with His God, the detailed nature of which must lie ever beyond human imagining; for it is absolutely free from that sense of alienation and hostility which (as I have already indicated) was ingrained in all Hebrew religion, just as it was prominent in even the most saintly of His own adherents. It would however be a fundamental error to regard His unique relation to Deity as being effortless and easy. On the contrary, it was inseparably fused with His moral nature, and was therefore a relation involving incessant strain in exactly the same way, though in a quite different sphere, that all artistic excellence necessitates high and constant spiritual tension. In all such cases alike it is totally impossible to separate what the individual does from what he essentially is; while (still further) “what he essentially is” constitutes, ultimately, his attitude to the Universe at least, if not explicitly to Deity. Religion, morality and personality are thus distinct aspects that are inextricably combined in one and the same extremely complex whole. In the long run therefore, and apart from isolated periods and instances, they rise and fall together; while their uniqueness in the case of Jesus constituted the incarnation of the divine nature in the human. Only (once again) not in any merely mechanical way, but rather on the supreme level of character, action and life; as is most

clearly seen, perhaps, in the conditions attending the death of Jesus. For unless this is viewed very much in the same light as the death of Socrates it can never be properly understood. The essential point, in both cases alike, is that neither man was a mere martyr in the sense of being the passive and helpless victim of hostile circumstances, like the countless unknown sufferers from historic persecutions. On the contrary, as I have already pointed out, death was deliberately chosen and accepted as the sole and inescapable condition of their inviolate moral, religious and personal integrity. It was so chosen with the full consciousness of all that it involved or—to state this in negative terms—of all that its evasion would have involved: that is the craven betrayal of every ideal hitherto upheld and defended, and with this therefore the fatal and hopeless vitiation of personality: the abandonment and destruction of the entire life's work, and so the absolute destruction of life itself in its highest, most real and spiritual significance. The test was crucial, and equally crucial the spiritual tension that it demanded; and thus death became, by no means the mere end of life, but on the contrary the supreme act of life—the final crisis under which every resource and capacity of selfhood had to be mobilized and deployed in one completest manifestation of its real nature and power: not “the great refusal” but the great acceptance: a sacrifice which was at the same moment a consummation: the final loss of everything except the essential and vital thing—the preservation of the unstained integrity of the self and all its ideals.

3. These then are the biographical and historic aspects of the situation with which we have to deal. But this must now be further regarded in its relation to the Universe and to Deity. For all ideals, and especially all

moral ideals, have been seen to express the infinitely diverse demands which the Universe imperatively addresses to the self; and this not in any merely arbitrary way, but simply because such ideals express the essential nature of the Universe and the manner in which that nature sustains and develops itself. For this, in the end, is what the familiar phrases "laws of Nature", "laws of art" or "of thought" all alike mean; just as well-founded national laws are the conditions which must be inviolably observed if nations, on the whole and in the long run, are to prosper and expand. All that the present argument requires, then, is the substitution of "Universe" for "nation"; for a man's country is simply his social and spiritual world—that is the realm wherein he himself and the Universe come into direct contact with each other; and even if it is argued that their most intimate contacts actually subsist within some narrower sphere of art, or politics or family circle, still it is obvious that these can never be isolated from the nation, since the highest and most permanent interests of both are in the end identical. The truth is of course that the average individual is too poor spirited to appreciate this. Beyond his own painfully restricted circle, therefore, he can scarcely ever pass; but every great statesman, or patriot or artist, lives in close spiritual touch with all his fellows as well as with his own specific interests.

All this, however, simply illustrates the fundamental principle, to which we must now revert, that all such ideals are categorical and in essence inviolable; at all costs they must be sustained and vindicated. This is perfectly obvious so far as all important legal and constitutional issues are concerned, alike as national and as international. But it is supremely true of specifically ethical ideals; not however (to repeat) because these are

uniquely exclusive and independent, but on the contrary because they are "all-inclusive and all-dominating". These categorical demands of the Universe, nevertheless, man himself can never properly fulfil; still he always realizes, either subconsciously or explicitly, that they must be so fulfilled, or that adequate compensation must be rendered for every failure. This likewise is patent throughout the administration of national law and order. Similarly it is this conviction, as we have seen repeatedly, that finds its keen expression in almost every type of religion, closely paralleled as it is by the dual principle of legal integrity and retribution as always being to some marked degree compensatory. But further, no compensation whatever can be more than partial and approximate; for the only real and true compensation, in the case of any ideal whose very essence it is to be inviolable, must be its absolute fulfilment. Throughout the spheres of art and knowledge this principle is unreservedly accepted and acted upon; no *actual* complete compensation is ever possible for a ruined picture or statue (unless its own creator reproduces it, which is not always practicable), and no substitution of any kind will suffice in place of the proof of a theory or the solution of a problem—the mere suggestion would be laughed out of court; and in this respect all legal penalties must be accepted as merely approximative simply because nothing more adequate can ever be attained—one of the stock objections, of course, to the ordinary administration of justice.

If we now expand these familiar conclusions, as any complete ethical theory plainly demands, to humanity in its fundamental moral relation to the Universe or to Deity, it at once follows that the sole actual vindication of ethical ideals—here to be viewed as universal or divine ideals—and the sole actual compensation for their viola-

tion, must consist in their full realization in human life and conduct. This constitutes the inexorable demand of Deity and at the same moment the inextinguishable desire of humanity.

It is therefore in both these aspects alike natural or inherent, so that to regard it as capricious, arbitrary or vindictive is precisely as illogical as so to regard the rigorous ideals of national and international law, or even, for that matter, the strict regimen prescribed by a sensible doctor to a querulous patient. From the supreme standpoint of history and actuality, therefore, the personality and life of Jesus constitute the sole satisfaction alike of this undying desire of mankind and this demand of Deity. For His fulfilment of the supreme moral ideal—that is His attainment of perfect selfhood through an incessant self-conquest and a complete self-realization which counted no self-sacrifice too great—was at once the vindication of that ideal and the adequate compensation for its violation. Thus it achieved what all religious ceremonies and rites, oblations and slaughter, had persistently attempted, but ever in vain; and equally all that the noblest of mankind had yearned to do, only to realize ever more clearly their own moral feebleness.

Regarded then in the light of the "ethical character of Reality", the life and personality of Jesus constitute its fullest possible expression, so far (that is) as humanity is concerned. For this "ethical character" is here manifested not only in the highest type of mind—namely selfhood—but equally in the highest type of selfhood. In His life and personality, still further, Deity became incarnate; and this in no merely passive and static way, as when natural beauty is viewed as one form of divine revelation, but on the contrary as essentially active and dynamic—as doing, for man, what man himself inces-

santly but vainly strives to do, since we have already found that to offer some manner of compensation for their wrong-doing, on behalf of those whom we love, is an indestructible impulse in human nature; an impulse, nevertheless, that can under no conditions be fully satisfied by man, because he is powerless to perform all that it seeks to do. The incarnation of Deity therefore, as actualized in the personality of Jesus, forms the completest possible revelation equally of the divine power, the divine holiness and the divine love. To employ a scientific analogy, the incarnation is best regarded as the focus of all those allied types of revelation previously considered. If it is to be criticized as a limitation, this can be only in the same sense that every physical focus is a limitation of the entire field of light or energy; but is also, for that very reason, an intensification of that field wherein it becomes most fully and clearly operative.¹ Thus every light focus is extremely restricted but at the same moment extremely bright; similarly, then, with Deity incarnate.

4. This conclusion must now be further expanded in terms of the purpose of Deity, which has previously been described as the bringing into existence "of reals capable of becoming more and more akin to Himself"—of beings who "can yield Him permanent satisfaction, and so be worthy of His love", in precisely the same sense that every great artist seeks and finds satisfaction in the aesthetic perfection of his creations.² Despite the inexpressible contrast in the two types of selfhood, man is akin to Deity in that both are selves, while selfhood can advance only by the continuous evolution of its inherent qualities—of reason and power, of emotion and goodness.

¹ "Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room. . . ."

² *The Nature of Deity*, p. 141; cf. chaps. iv, v.

In all these respects alike however, but especially with regard to goodness, there arises that indelible vitiation of personality which has already been discussed; so that unless and until this vitiation is removed, complete kinship to the divine must remain absolutely impossible. As the history of religion abundantly proves, man has always, either subconsciously or distinctly, keenly realized this truth; for he is not only conscious but also *self-conscious*—aware, that is to say, of his own nature, his own power and his own defectiveness.

This, at bottom, is the essence equally of the ethical situation and of ethical problems; and any ethical theory that ignores these facts is radically incomplete. Once again therefore there is nothing in the least degree strained nor artificial involved. For in so far as ethics forms the basis and the background of law, exactly the same principles hold true. The relation of the individual to his nation and to national law is, ultimately, *a relation between selves*. However impersonal law itself may be, it forms, essentially, the considered expression of the collective mind, equally as rational and as emotional; this is patent alike in common law and in statute law as systematized by the legislature. Primitive law, further, is much more emotional than rational—a matter of private revenge and of social feuds; so that not until civilization is highly advanced does the familiar modern impersonality of law become one of its most essential features. But at no stage, however elevated, do the social emotions become totally suppressed; they simply become more effectively controlled and at the same time more and more influential, so that unless the formal administration of justice remains intimately linked to the passionate *love* of justice it easily becomes venial. In the abstract ideal state, presumably, social life would be directly

related to impersonal law. In all actual societies, on the other hand, the citizen is subject to some sovereign ruler who is like himself a person; and however far short of the abstract ideal this may be, it obviously expresses the instinctive feeling that the relation between citizen and law is, in essence, a relation between persons. Theoretically, for example, the king is present in every one of his courts, while the pardon of criminals similarly remains a royal prerogative, as does the conferment of all social honours.

Now the final implication of all this is that every offence against the law destroys the ideal harmony that should subsist between the citizen on the one hand, and on the other, the sovereign as representing his fellow citizens. It thereupon becomes the ruler's imperative duty to punish the offender both adequately and reasonably. But here again the essential point is that the infliction, and also the suffering, of punishment are regarded as the indispensable means to reestablishing the original harmony. It is vitally important to observe, in this respect, that to some degree the primal relation, once it has been disturbed, can never be restored; hence arises the crucial significance of averting or quashing legal convictions, since if they are allowed to stand they remain an indelible stain on the individual's social status and record, even if this is nothing more serious than the endorsement of his car licence, while acts of attainder must be repealed by the legislature; so that although he cannot be repeatedly punished for any one offence, still previous convictions may always be taken into account. In principle therefore the suffering which punishment entails, and often the penalty itself, constitute some degree of compensation for the wrong inflicted; while whenever adequate compensation becomes impossible, the punishment is there-

upon rendered absolute under the form of life imprisonment or death. In all these familiar facts, then, we readily perceive the reflection of the basal moral principles already discussed. Every judicial conviction forms an indelible vitiation of the individual's legal status, permanently excluding him from holding certain posts of civic responsibility, exactly as bankruptcy does in other important respects; to that degree therefore it is an inescapable vitiation of the social aspects of his personality.¹ But it is a vitiation that is, to some degree, removed by suffering punishment, and which every sane and healthy society desires to have removed; while criminals themselves occasionally offer to undergo punishment solely with this end in view, or offer "conscience money" to the revenue officials, so that they may thereby regain the ideal relationship to king and fellow citizens. In the fighting forces indeed, and to a less extent in the civil services, the dishonour of forfeiting this direct relationship to the sovereign, and the privilege of reestablishing it often at the cost of life itself, are much more keenly felt than any other consideration.

Underlying and sustaining all good government therefore, and equally the administration of justice, there is the principle of maintaining an ideal harmony between persons—whether between fellow citizens, or between ruler and subjects, makes no material difference. This ideal harmony—by no means easily achieved—is impaired by every offence, and in extreme circumstances permanently destroyed; while it can be restored only after such compensation as is considered adequate has been rendered. From a slightly different standpoint, similarly,

¹ It may of course be easily over-emphasized, as in the popular attitude to discharged criminals, which is too often quite indefensible except in so far as it expresses a healthy instinct in favour of innocence.

every offence involves a social or legal vitiation of personality, which again can be removed (if at all) only if due compensation is given.

5. So much for the salient legal and social aspects of the situation. But these have been found to imply yet more fundamental moral principles whose real character, in my own opinion, too often remains obscure. For we have seen that no compensation for wrong can ever be more than approximate; this indeed the majority of legal penalties admittedly are, as when *e.g.* sums are awarded for damage to character and reputation or in divorce judgments, although the actual harm is plainly irretrievable. Similarly the rehabilitation of the social status of offenders is at best only approximate, the fact being that society and law always seek the closest approximation possible, which is then accepted *faute de mieux*; this, again, being clearly recognized by the offender himself, so that he afterwards stands continually on guard against minor lapses which would in other persons be tacitly ignored. This then is the utmost that any legal and social system can ever achieve; but as soon as we penetrate beneath the surface we find that, ultimately, the issue resolves itself (once again) into the relation *between selves* as such—not only, that is, between ruler and subject nor between fellow citizens, as mere factors subordinate to the social structure, but directly between one person and another. To this subtle spiritual relation, however, law as such can never penetrate; while on the other hand all legal penalties, as well as their remission in the commutation of sentence and in pardon, necessarily presuppose the radical modification of this relation—presuppose (that is to say) not merely that no further offences will be committed, but still more that the individual's entire attitude to society has been revolu-

tionized. This perennial presupposition becomes patent in every reinstatement in the civil and fighting services; for this is granted only when there is clear evidence of a radical change in character and will, not simply after the termination of the punishment. Similarly in ecclesiastical discipline, which approaches the purely ethical standard more closely than do civil and criminal law, and again in private family affairs; so that before he can be readmitted the black sheep must grow a white fleece. Neither punishment nor restitution in itself, therefore, ever suffices apart from the still more essential moral revolution—apart from that radical reorientation of the will which forms the reconstitution of the whole personality. This can be effected in the end, finally, solely by the individual for himself; others may influence him in many ways, but the ultimate decision rests with himself alone. For herein consists his freedom; and were anyone but he to make the crucial choice this freedom, which is absolutely essential to selfhood, would thereupon be destroyed.

Such are, in brief outline, the necessary moral presuppositions of all legal procedure and social order. But law and society, again, are really the self's immediate spiritual world—"the realm wherein self and Universe come into direct contact with each other";¹ or from the theistic standpoint, the realm wherein self and Deity are in direct relation, though not of course the only such realm. The foregoing conclusions must therefore be yet further generalized, in the light of this wider principle, by considering the implications of the incarnation of Deity in their bearing upon the individual self. The implications thus involved are primarily ethical, although they can never be severed from religious issues. The

¹ *Ante* p. 204.

moral purpose and value of the incarnation, then, lie in its *adequate* compensation for man's violation of the divine ideal and, at the same moment, in its vindication and actualizing of that ideal.¹ But even when these supreme ends have been attained there still remains the question—What bearing has all this on that vitiation of personality which we have seen to be indelible, not only from the ethical but equally from the social and the legal standpoints? To call it indelible means that it is irremovable; does this mean, still further, that it is irremediable?

It must be clearly realized, to begin with, that so far as actual affairs are concerned, such spiritual taints are absolutely indelible. They form part of the unalterable past, and alike from the legal, the social and the individual standpoint they persist as dark shadows, or even as potential dangers, during not merely the life of the person directly involved but often of his posterity, as *e.g.* in the origin of some noble families and the historic and biographical records of many statesmen; while from the bitter memory of the agent himself they are ineradicable, no matter how heroically he may have redeemed his fault. This itself is in fact the crucial issue—that life must be devoted to regaining a priceless status which need never have been lost; that under no circumstances can Sir Galahad's words be his—

My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure.

Instead he has been Sir Bedivere—

Untrue, unknightly, traitor-hearted;

and although, like Sir Bedivere, he may at last do what

¹ *Ante* p. 205.

he should and might have done at first, still this contrast remains absolute and eternal.

In this respect, then, even the incarnation of Deity can make no difference whatever. The past remains unchangeably what it was; but although the taint wrought by evil can never be destroyed, it can nevertheless be transformed. For as I have elsewhere maintained, the highest conceivable good, in its most perfect type, is created in and through the positive destruction of evil. In the long run, certainly, all evil is self-annihilating; but this is never because evil gradually disappears of itself, since it is far too dynamic to suffer such a fate, but rather because through long and strenuous struggle it is vanquished by all the persistent and still more powerful tendencies of the Universe; thus only can the highest Good be brought into being. Evil rouses, as it were, all the antagonistic energies into activity, and is thus made, if only indirectly, the means to the Good.¹ Far from being an abstract or visionary principle, its operation becomes sufficiently obvious even in ordinary experience, since it is always danger that reveals the hero, and persecution the martyr; and to this truth we must also appeal for the solution of our final problem. For the incarnation, as the completest revelation equally of the divine holiness and the divine love, is the reaction or the response of Deity to the evil of human selfhood with all its ineradicable consequences. It is that unique act of fully adequate compensation which alone enables the self to recover its lost moral and spiritual status, while it is at the same time the vindication of every cherished ideal that has been violated. It fulfils completely therefore the inherent threefold impulse of humanity: (*a*) to effect compensation at all costs, (*b*) to do so vicariously

¹ Cf. *The Nature of Deity*, pp. 109-111.

whenever the occasion necessitates this, and (c) to accept the vicarious sacrifice and all its results if the individual's own incapacity renders this course the sole possible alternative, however repugnant it may be felt to be. It must once again be observed that there is nothing strained nor artificial about this; it is, on the contrary, simply the working principle of every highly constituted society. The transfusion of blood for complete strangers; every response at no matter what cost to an S.O.S. appeal; a parent's payment of a debt of honour or fine incurred by his child; the reinstatement of a degraded officer whose heroism has redeemed his lapse; and less frequently, simply because the conditions are much too rigorous to be ever easily relaxed, the grant of full pardon, on account not of anything the offender has done himself, but of another's sacrifice on his behalf and even without his concurrence—all these indicate nothing more than the normal working ideals of social life at its best. But as such they are all essentially ethical ideals that are felt, no matter how confusedly, to be inescapably imperative; while this in turn means that they reveal the ultimate nature of the spiritual Universe and at the same moment express its categorical demands to the individual and social self. It is still further obvious that in all such circumstances there must always be involved a vicarious element which, from the very conditions of the case, must exhibit the inevitable suffering and sacrifice that all evil necessarily entails as its natural consequence or (if we prefer the term) penalty. But to limit the vicarious aspect solely to the pain or punishment, as is so frequently done, is radically to misinterpret the entire situation; for while these factors are certainly often vicarious, it is never they that are fundamental. What is really fundamental is always the *vicarious*

compensation that is thus effected, inseparably associated as this always is with the triumphant vindication of justice or nobility, or any other of the supreme ideals which the highest types of selfhood feel to be indispensable.

Another too common misunderstanding of the issues at stake lies in describing the governing conditions as harsh or unmerciful, as if it were being insisted upon that someone must suffer, and suffer arbitrarily, and that this must be someone other than the offender himself. In actual fact of course the precise contrary holds true. Perfect justice and sound law agree in demanding that the offender himself in the first instance, and no other, should bear the natural consequences of his wrong-doing; while in reality, as we have repeatedly found, he can never escape its subjective effects however he may fare in other respects. Mercy always consists therefore not in any abrogation of justice, but rather in the due proportioning of penalties to the deserts, claims and capacity of the individual; and this is the reason for reserving pardon as the prerogative of the supreme executive authority. Thus all vicarious acts, in principle, must be purely voluntary; there can be *e.g.* no legal insistence whatever on blood transfusions, nor even, so far as that goes, on rescues at sea or at fires. All such splendid traditions are sustained, ultimately, only by the inherent moral instinct of developed selfhood, so that in low grade societies they are the rare exception rather than the rule; and whenever the vicarious discharge of penalties is accepted it is always as from, or on behalf of, the wrong-doer himself; no other person *e.g.* can undergo imprisonment in his place. The recognition and acceptance of vicarious acts are therefore in themselves a manifestation not in any degree of harshness, but on the contrary of leniency and mercy in exactly the

same spirit as the grant of pardon, but in a different form.

We need only recognize then that the concept of the Good involves justice equally with mercy; that vicarious sacrifice is inspired always and only by love and is in proportion thereto; that all genuine moral ideals without exception reveal the constitution and irresistible tendency of the spiritual Universe; that no fine personality will claim nor accept pardon apart from some adequate restitution; and finally that no human law nor compensation can ever do more than approximate to the rigorous necessities of the situation—we need only realize all this to perceive in the incarnation of Deity the supreme actualization of all these dominant and irrefragable principles of the highest types of moral selfhood—of perfect justice and mercy, of complete vindication of the Good and adequate atonement for its violation, of the utmost vicarious sacrifice that infinite love could demand and inspire; the supreme self-revelation, therefore, of Deity to the spirit of man.

It remains to consider this principle in its relation to the divine purpose—that is the creation of beings capable of becoming ever more akin to Deity Himself; and just as we have found evolution, in all its diverse phases, to be one method of effecting this purpose, so His incarnation is the parallel but higher method which enables this more intimate kinship to be established and sustained. Its ultimate basis, plainly, is that common selfhood which man shares with the Supreme Self and which forms the spiritual atmosphere, as it were, first of the moral realm and, in consequence, of all social and legal relations between selves; ¹ relations, still further, that are always

¹ Every restriction of personality carries with it some limitation of legal status and rights, as *e.g.* in minors, slaves, aliens, imbeciles and of course animals,

most rigorously conditioned so far as the individual and his nation or ruler are concerned, or even his family, as in the ancient *patria potestas*. Taken in their entirety therefore they constitute an ideal system which it is the duty of all individuals cooperatively to sustain, and to which all law is an attempt to approximate as definitely and closely as possible; every offence is such because it violates this governing ideal, sometimes legally but always ethically; and the sanctions of punishment are (*inter alia*) two: first the protection of the ideal itself from that destruction which every crime threatens by implication, and (secondly) the reestablishment of the normal relationship between the offender and society which is clearly indispensable to the very continuance of society itself. At bottom therefore (to repeat) this "normal relationship" is a "relation between selves", most clearly typified perhaps in the relation between citizen and king or president. It is (in other words) a real kinship which was primitively, probably, one of actual common origin and descent as *e.g.* in all clan connections; but even when these lose their importance, there still persists a substantial social and legal kinship—a participation in common rights and a cooperation in common duties—which is always capable of diminution or expansion, and which occasionally comes into marked prominence as in the conferring of honours and decorations by the ruler in person.

But the essential truth about this highly complex situation is that such an expansion of what is in reality a spiritual kinship is possible only while the ideal which implicitly governs all social relations is maintained intact or, if violated, is effectively reestablished. No criminal *eo ipso* can act with complete freedom; no member "hammered" can operate on the stock exchange;

no undischarged bankrupt engage in certain kinds of business; no one in social disgrace attend court functions—all such exclusions alike most forcibly and unmistakably express that severance of the ideal kinship which can be terminated solely by some quite definite procedure, either actual and practical, or formal and representative like presentation at court; *e.g.* by a discharge in bankruptcy or a legal pardon. But however adequate these may be nationally and socially, ethically they can never (as we have seen) be more than approximate; while this approximation, again, is sufficient in all human affairs simply because every individual without exception is somehow imperfect, finite and even in some measure guilty. All the finest types of personality nevertheless keenly desire an ever fuller expansion of social kinship, and are prepared to offer the most costly restitution, if need be, to rehabilitate themselves so as to render this possible. But suppose now that it proves to be absolutely impossible; and suppose further that what I myself can never do, although I know full well that it must be done—the familiar principle of the categorical imperative—is done vicariously for me by another with infinite pain and sacrifice. Under such conditions, what must be the response of the self?—conditions which are by no means abstract and artificial, but which I have endeavoured to show actually characterize the incarnation in its relation to humanity.

There can be but one reply. If the individual retains the faintest vestige of nobility, and unless he has become hopelessly immune to every fine impulse, he must react in two outstanding ways; first by making himself worthy, in every aspect of his life and being, of the kinship to which he has thus been restored; and secondly by humble loyalty and devout love to the person who has made the

indispensable sacrifice. Such, then, must be the ideal of man's attitude to Deity. Only so can that ever closer kinship with the divine nature, which it is the eternal purpose of Deity to effect, be acquired and sustained.

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